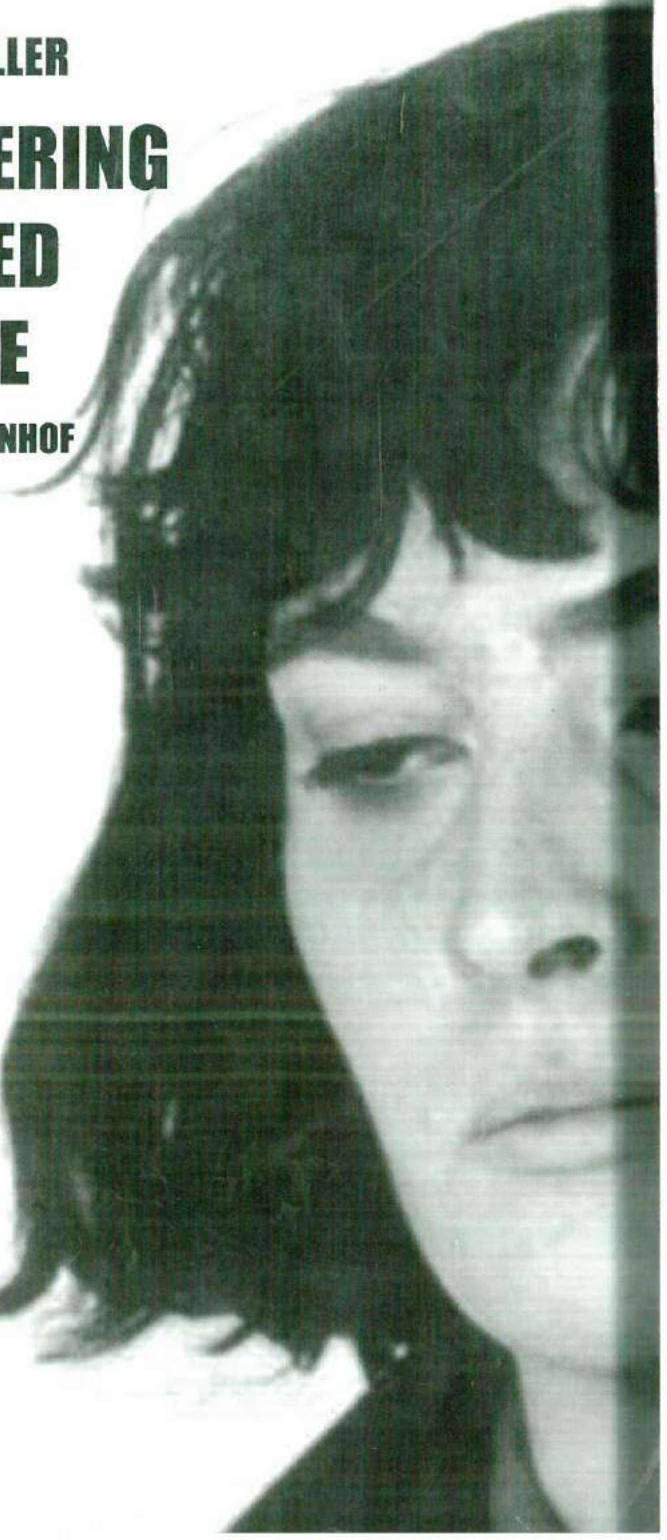
MARGRIT SCHILLER

REMEMBERING THE ARMED STRUGGLE

LIFE IN BAADER-MEINHOF



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LIFE IN BAADER-MEINHOF

Translated by Lindsay Munro
Foreword by Oswaldo Bayer

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For Benita and Nicolas

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Without the help of Ernesto Kroch and Eva Weil the manuscript for this book would still be lying in the drawer of my desk.

And I would like to say sorry to all of those who I left behind in my life without explanation, first and foremost Helma Beierlein and Gabi.

I think that, in our struggle, we have assumed a personal responsibility which we have to commit to in our own names.

In most cases I name the real names of all those who are well-known or dead.

The unknown or those who have remained incognito should remain so: Bernd, Christiane, Christina, Ingrid and Stefan are imaginary names for non-imaginary people.

I would also like to thank Regina Weps, without whom the Spanish edition would not have been possible, and Linda Etchart, who together with Nathalie Ferrier, put so much hard work into making this English edition possible.

Foreword*

Margrit Schiller's book took me back to the 1960s and 1970s and to the questions for which there were no answers. Not about Germany, but about my country: Argentina. The same problem in two completely different scenarios. The circumstances were different but the questions were the same and continue to be the same. Despite one being in the First World and the other in the Third World.

But what was strange was that Margrit Schiller came to ask me to write a prologue, I, who am not a defender of the *guerrilla*, merely a poor prophet of what was going to happen and what did happen.

At that time, she was very young and I was a man in my forties; I had already been part of fervent debates among young Latin Americans who saw armed insurrection as the only way of ending an unjust and corrupt society. If Margrit Schiller had been in Buenos Aires at the end of the 1960s, she might have engaged in debate with me and, on hearing my arguments, might have denounced me as a bourgeois reactionary, as the young Peronist *montoneros* came to label me in those years.

And not because I supported the military regimes or the corrupt politicians elected by the people in those times, but because those young people longing for change knew me as a leftist revolutionary, but that at the same time I was trying to convince them that the guerrilla option would end in total failure, in the loss of the best people; that it would give the forces of reaction an opportunity to strengthen their exploitative and corrupt society on a yet more solid base: as did happen, sadly.

Everything began in Havana in 1960, barely a year after the Cuban Revolution of January 1959, when a small group of Argentinians, including myself, had a meeting with Che Guevara. At that meeting he tried to convince us that the way of changing the Argentinian regime was through a guerrilla war, which should begin in the mountains around Córdoba, in the centre of Argentina. I remembered that in countering his argument I pointed out that the forces of repression in Argentina were much better organised than those of Batista's Cuba, and I listed one by one all the state organisations that existed to combat any leftist rebellion. Che looked at me with an expression of profound sadness and uttered just four words in response to my long arguments with regard to the forces of repression: 'They are all mercenaries.'

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*The original epilogue from the Spanish language version of this book which usefully contextualises the international scenario.

I recall that after a moment of silence, the other Argentinians broke into an applause.

At that moment I understood everything, and that reply enabled me to understand what happened afterwards. I said to myself: clearly to be a revolutionary you cannot begin by analysing the obstacles, but you have to believe in your own convictions and throw yourself into fighting injustice through rebellion, that gift of the gods for those who believe in altruism and solidarity. But I could not do that because of the way I am, and when Che's ideas became reality in the streets of Argentina, I continued to warn that death and reversal would be the outcome. Yet at the same time as I was issuing these warnings my understanding and my solidarity with the persecuted grew.

Margrit Schiller is one of those protagonists, in other latitudes, in the First World, where it is much more difficult to understand her actions than if she had been in the Third World. But I am not one of those who would confine myself to calling the group which she joined, the Red Army Faction or Baader-Meinhof, a 'terrorist' organisation, because one would have to explain why it was 'terrorist', why it became 'terrorist'. And to do that, you have to understand the history and the context. One cannot speak of the RAF without telling the whole story.

I was a student in Hamburg between 1952 and 1956, and in those years I was a member of the SDS, the Sozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund (Socialist German Student Union), that was leaning towards social democracy. What were those students like barely a decade after Nazism and the most destructive war in history? They wanted to do things. While primary and secondary school children studied German history up to 1913, young people began to ask about more recent history. I remember that the young people in the SDS did not buy the line of the 'collective guilt of the German people'. They did not recoil from their responsibility, but nor did they accept the position of: 'We are all guilty, we ask forgiveness of the Jews and we fight the communists.' It was the Cold War. The SDS and its young members wanted to know the role of the powerful in 1933: German industrial capital, the Church, the political parties of the right, from the Catholic Zentrumspartei to the Liberal Party. They wanted to know why the concentration camp executioners were put on trial while those who gave the orders from behind a desk were able to follow a new political career, like Prime Minister Kiesinger, President Lubke, the first Baden Wuerttemburg president, Hans Filbinger with his dreadful past of being a Nazi military judge, like President Carstens, who had been Goebbels' secretary.

There was talk of freedom and democracy and the West, while at the same time European countries continued to have colonies and participated in the repression of the peoples, such as the French in Vietnam and in Algeria; and later the German social democrat government sold arms to Videla's military dictatorship in Argentina. I remember the debates of those years that had just begun, and which took off at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, when people held strong positions. I remember the search for alternatives to the unjust system and the dream of a socialism free of stalinisms.

There was a kind of double game being played in West German public life: the individual was being taught to be a protagonist, not to follow the example of previous generations who had let themselves be led by a demagogue; they all had to learn to defend themselves against unwarranted interference in their lives by the State. Not to let themselves be deceived again. For that reason, they were told, they must exercise their autonomy (this was important later, because a section of German youth took this seriously). But at the same time, they were to believe in the United States, in the alliance against evil, which came from the East. That is, they must be protagonists, but within the system.

Margrit Schiller's generation was, on reaching adulthood, carried away by a chain of events that was unstoppable: the 1968 student revolution and the beautiful slogan, a 'dream of power'. Then there was the assassination of the student Benno Ohnesorg in a Berlin street; Jean Paul Sartre at the head of the German students' demonstrations, declaring that the communists could not bring about the revolution because they were frightened of it; the shooting of Rudi Dutschke, perhaps the most distinguished of all the student leaders of the 1968 – an attack which eventually killed him.
I remember a poem by Biermann, the great German poet:

Three bullets hit Rudi Dutschke
A bloody attack
We saw it
And we saw who shot him
Oh Germany, your murderers!

Students and peoples of the world also had to confront the struggle of the Vietnamese people against imperialism in that era, and another poem of the German poet, Erich Fried:

> Vietnam is Germany
> Her destiny is our destiny
> The bombs for her liberty
> Are the bombs for our liberty

refers to the bombs of the *guerrilla* not those of the US planes. Fried was one of the most popular poets of the generation of 1968.

War was declared on the capitalist press, among them the Springer group; and there was the Prague Spring which was another challenge to authoritarianism, while Mao became the guiding light for the Third World; and in Latin America, with its epic hero Che Guevara so recently assassinated, the whole continent was rocked by protest and insurrection, women joining the vanguard and raising the flag of feminism.

This was the world in which one section of German youth would make such a dramatic stand.

The moment came in which one had to make a decision: to step aside and wait to see what would happen, or to confront the violence from above with the wounded violence of the oppressed. In Germany, Che would have taken the second path.

How was German youth supposed to react – young people who had been taught to lead the struggle for the rights of all – when they discovered that US bombers were taking off from German territory on their way to obliterate Vietnamese people and even perversely to poison their forests with Agent Orange? It was that which drove the Red Army Faction to blow up US military bases – because it was there, in the military airfield of Frankfurt, that the US planes landed with their cargo of incendiary bombs on their way to kill the Vietnamese people. Why could not Germany and the rest of the democratic world shout out loud: 'What is the United States doing in Vietnam?'

What were they supposed to do, these young Germans who were expected to demonstrate civil courage following Auschwitz? Their options were: to stand up in the Bannmeile (where it was allowed to demonstrate no closer than 300 metres from the Congress), knowing that in the parliament there was a total silence on this subject; to pray or to distribute leaflets; or to vote every four years for another politician who would keep silent.

Or to say, as was said in Argentina: 'No violence.' I have heard so many politicians and priests say: I am against all violence. We are all against violence, but. And? It exists – and how am I supposed to react to violence? To say no to violence but accept in silence that at that moment a US bomber kills in silence 163 children in a Vietnamese school?

I do not have the answer. Margrit Schiller did have an answer. She lost, and all of us who did nothing or at the most signed a petition or went on hunger strike for three days, we said: you made a mistake. The same as all the right-wing, centrist and leftist opportunists, and the silent masses who spend their summer holidays at the beach, and the young people who are training to be the best managers, and the political representatives and the mayors, the priests and vicars, the lecturers and teachers, and the high intellectuals of the left.

Margrit was mistaken, but she did not repent. We were not wrong, but we lost as much or more than her.

This book about the armed struggle enables us to learn about Margrit's honest mistakes and to see ourselves in the mirror.
Margrit Schiller with her truth and honesty. The cynics and cynicism, the greatest of all corruptions, congratulated with tears after doing their duty as great democrats, applauded, appearing on television, receiving awards. Our democrats. We look at ourselves in the mirror and we see ourselves in them. And in the statistics of starvation.

Despite Stammheim. Despite solitary confinement.

Margrit Schiller, thank you for your life, and for your book.

Oswaldo Bayer 2001

Introduction

In introducing an autobiography of a Baader-Meinhof member there are a number of difficult, and complicated issues to deal with. Whether to call the group the Red Army Faction or the Baader-Meinhof group is the first, and generally the latter is preferred as it refers to the founders and leaders of the group. It described itself as a revolutionary "urban guerilla" group that engaged in armed resistance against a state it saw as being fascist in nature. The RAF was formally founded in 1970 by Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, Horst Mahler, Ulrike Meinhof, Irmgard Möller and others, and Margrit Schiller joined in 1971, and was arrested and imprisoned after just a few weeks.

One question is why should such a book be published? The answer lies in the fact that understanding what motivates people to get involved in armed struggle against the state is still an important question. Distinguishing between revolutionaries and what is called 'terrorism' in some quarters and "freedom fighters" in others, is a theoretical question that has implications for all. Baader Meinhof's approach to revolution and armed struggle was highly controversial back in the 1970s and still divides opinion across Europe. Stefan Aust's work on the group, and the film that came from his research, *The Baader Meinhof Complex* (2008) have likewise caused controversy. The historical and political questions that are posed by such a work are as important today as they were in the 1960s, when the anti-imperialist movements first emerged in the West. Post-war Germany was a special case in world politics because of its role in the Second World War, and the historical legacy of Nazism. Baader-Meinhof members saw the freedom of ex-Nazis as a direct affront to democracy and revolution, and this provided a powerful impetus to their struggle.

As Oswaldo Bayer points out in his prologue, many of those who had been sitting behind desks issuing orders in Nazi Germany emerged unscathed, and as far as many in the Red Army Faction were concerned, the German state was still staffed by many ex-Nazis and carried out actions which were anti-democratic and pro-Nazi. It was from this analysis, and a critique of American imperialism, that the Red Army Faction developed its theory of the necessity of armed struggle, and of the need to link all anti-imperialist struggles in the West and the developing world. These unique factors made the rise of Baadar Meinhof qualitatively different to political movements in other Western countries.

The author tries to make sense of the political circumstances, and the pressures and forces, that lead people to become not only politically active, but to engage in armed struggle for political aims. This is a debate that has powerful resonance in the contemporary cultural climate and makes the historical understanding of such political motivations all the more important. Schiller describes the forces and ideas that impelled her to act as she did, and this makes the book a valuable contribution to the literature on the subject. The book is also an important insight into an era when political culture was re-defining itself and the ghosts of the 'Auschwitz' generation were being confronted. The widespread political turmoil of the 1960s began in part as a reaction to American imperialism, to the anti-colonial struggles that were emerging in many countries and from the emergence of a 'New Left' who were critical of the old Soviet Union. This was allied with counter-cultural student and youth movements that were revolutionary in the widest sense, and which were as concerned with individual liberation as with political liberation. The Red Army Faction emerged from these forces but saw merely cultural and political revolution as being inadequate to confronting the power of American imperialism and of the German state. In particular it was felt the conservative media In Germany were heavily biased against reform and de-Nazification as they were owned and controlled by reactionaries such as Axel Springer, whose papers were implacably opposed to student radicalism. The climate in the 1960s was highly charged, tense and seemingly revolutionary, which bred an atmosphere in which the Red Army faction received a great deal of support, even for its armed struggle and killing of ex-Nazis and industrialists. This is probably only understandable in the peculiar German context, where discussion of its Nazi past had been heavily repressed. Schiller's generation were rebelling not only against imperialism and injustice, but also against their parents, from a generation who appeared to be complicit in the Nazi era, and in the 'forgetting' that was part of the culture.

One of the arguments of the Baader Meinhof group was precisely that in no real sense was the West German state democratic, and that by armed struggle a revolutionary group would force the state to reveal its true, fascist, identity. This line of argument was accepted by many on the left at the time and led these revolutionary militants to a position where armed struggle was seen as the only way forward.

The general attitude of the Baader Meinhof group is summarised by Richard Huffman:

"It wasn't just about killing Americans, and killing pigs, at least not at first. It was about attacking the illegitimate state that these pawns served. It was about scraping the bucolic soil and exposing the fascist, Nazi-tainted bedrock that the modern West German state was propped upon. It was about war on the forces of reaction. It was about Revolution."[1]

The less militant revolutionaries who advocated a 'long march through the institutions' were dismissed by the Baader Meinhof group as mistaken and dilettantish. Their very first communiqué after going underground made this evident: "You have to make clear that it is Social Democratic garbage to assert that imperialism...would allow itself to be infiltrated, to be led around by the nose, to be overpowered, to be intimidated, to be abolished without a struggle. Make it clear that the Revolution will not be an Easter Parade, that the pigs will naturally escalate the means as far as they can go."[2]

These statements capture the defiant and aggressive outlook of the Baader Meinhof group and perhaps explain in part their attraction to alienated youth and disaffected radicals. The lure of violence, of immediate, powerful action, unmediated by complexity or contradiction, is always a danger to youthful radicals and was interestingly analysed in the recent German film *The Edukators.*

Within a few years of the group's attacks, all of the leaders were arrested and imprisoned and from 1972-77 the infamous Stammheim trails took place in a specially built prison complex. This spawned new successors who took up the cudgel on behalf of the Red Army Faction, a second and third generation of armed revolutionaries which continued right into the 1990s. Ulrike Meinhof, Andreas Baader, Gudrun Enslin all died in Stammheim prison, murdered by the state, according to this account. Those who died were in different prison cells that were under constant surveillance. The videotapes of their final hours have never come to light. Coming to terms with the legacy of the Baader-Meinhof group, and all of the political questions posed by their actions, is very much still a critical debate.

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[1] Huffman, Richard *The Gun Speaks The Baader-Meinhof at the Dawn of Terror (Baader Meinhof.com)*

[2] Ibid.

Arrest in Hamburg

21 October 1971. I had now spent the last four weeks, night and day, in a flat in Hamburg hiding from the police. On 25 September there had been a shootout with the police at a train station car park in Freiburg. I was there, but hadn't shot. Despite a search warrant, I managed with a great deal of effort to get to Hamburg. I had now been living there for a short time in illegality.

On this 21 October, a meeting with some of the members of the RAF was to take place in a Hamburg flat. We were going to discuss political questions and our next campaign. I was also to be discussed. I didn't know if I still wanted to stay with the RAF. Was there a choice?

For the RAF, Hamburg had become a dangerous place. Astrid Proll had been arrested in May, Petra Schelm had been killed in July in an exchange of gunfire with the police during which Werner Hoppe had been arrested. The same fate could happen to any one of us at any time. Since the shootout in Freiburg, the police had been searching feverishly for me.

I had to leave my hiding place for the first time in order to attend the meeting. To prevent myself from being discovered, I had cut my reddish brown hair short and dyed it black. I put on a red mini-dress and, over that, a knee-length black coat. I felt as if I was in disguise. The police description of me said that I only wore long trousers. I put on make-up to hide my high cheekbones and to change my eyes.

A pistol that I had had for a short time now was in my handbag. I had never shot a gun in my life. The manhunt constituted a threat to me. I felt safer with the gun, but I hoped that I wouldn't have to use it.

We had decided to set off for the meeting during the early evening rush hour so that we would not be noticed. It was already dark when the three of us made our way to the flat where the meeting was to take place next to the Alstertal shopping centre. We took detours, changed underground and city train several times and observed what went on around us carefully to make sure that nobody was following us. We separated for the last part of the route from the Alstertal city train station.

In the flat, Ulrike Meinhof, Jan-Karl Raspe, Irmgard Moeller, Manfred Grashof, Holger Meins, Klaus Juenschke and three or four others turned up one by one. Whether Gudrun Ensslin or Andreas Baader came later or stayed in Berlin that night, I can't remember.

The flat looked like all of the RAF flats: a few foam mattresses and bed covers, a telephone, two radios, a few suitcases and bags, tools, weapons, ammunition, explosives. The windows were covered with lengths of cloth and slits had been cut in them through which we could see the street in front of the block of flats.

All of those present lay their weapons aside. I put my handbag against one of the walls. Everybody took a good look at my new outfit. One of the radios was tuned into the police radio which one of us always listened to carefully. If something happened on the radio, others moved in closer to hear exactly what was going on. It was planned that we all stay overnight and then leave the flat one after the other the following day.

It was already after midnight when Holger, whom I hadn't seen for weeks, asked me what had happened during the shootout in Freiburg. I had just begun to explain when he interrupted me and asked in an aggressive tone: "And why did you not shoot?" I caught my breath, was completely taken aback, blushed and was silent. Nobody had asked me that up to now, and I hadn't asked myself either. I actually thought that the comrade I was with had shot too quickly and excessively. I didn't answer. The question as to why I hadn't shot was worrying me now, even after Holger had begun to talk about a planned bank robbery.

Then Ulrike came in: "I have to use the phone. You, come with me", she said to Gerhard Mueller and, looking around the room to see who should accompany her, pointed to me: "Come on, you too." Ulrike always felt especially at risk in Hamburg, because she had spent most of her life in this city and was well known here. There was a telephone in the flat, but we never telephoned from one of our flats to another. We were certain that telephones were monitored extensively. Ulrike wanted to go to a telephone box.

The three of us left the flat, separating at the front door: Ulrike proceeded alone; Gerhard and I followed at a distance, but kept her in sight. The block of flats we were leaving was L-shaped and looked towards a shopping centre that had two large car parks which led to a street called Heegbarg.

Ulrike crossed the Heegbarg and we walked along the side of the car park in the same direction as she was going. When we reached the second car park, Gerhard said quietly to me: "Watch out for that Ford over there with the dimmed lights! There are two guys sitting in it, and they're probably pigs." Ulrike seemed not to have noticed the light-coloured car, because she disappeared behind some bushes in front of a flat building. We continued walking.

After one or two long minutes, Ulrike came on to the pavement at the other end of the building. We immediately crossed the street, in order to be closer to her. The light-coloured Ford moved forward – the lights now on full – and slowly left the car park. At the first crossing, Ulrike turned left into Saseler Damm and crossed over the road diagonally, while we stood still until the lights changed to green. Then we also continued, no longer behind Ulrike but straight along the Heegbarg. The Ford, the only car to be seen in any direction, did not follow us, but turned into Saseler Damm where Ulrike was.

All of a sudden things became loud. We could hear footsteps echoing, tyres screeching. We stood where we were and turned around: Ulrike ran towards us and shouted: "Shit, it's the pigs!" Then the Ford shot at high speed around the corner and passed by Ulrike, tried to block her path and then came to a standstill right across the pavement. The passenger door was thrown open and a man in civilian clothes jumped out and screamed: "Halt! Don't move! Police!" Ulrike was faster, managed to get around the car and shouted: "Quick, out of here!" and stormed down the Heegbarg. Gerhard immediately followed her, caught up with her quickly, and both of them fled along a pathway that ran adjacent to a row of houses. One of the policemen followed them. I was frozen to the spot, watching what was happening.

The policeman reached Ulrike and managed to get hold of her handbag. She tripped for a second, but tore herself free. Gerhard, who was now running in front of Ulrike, stopped, turned around with the weapon in his hand and shot. Once, twice, again and again. The policeman fell and his colleague, who had followed the three of them, threw himself to the ground. I heard more shots and then Ulrike and Gerhard disappeared into the darkness.

I saw what happened and couldn't believe it: it was the same situation as four weeks ago at the shootout in Freiburg.

After everything had become quiet, I came to myself. I saw the empty car of the plain clothes policemen: the doors were wide open and I heard the quiet squawking of the police radio. In a few steps I was next to the car, saw that the key was still in the ignition, got behind the wheel and drove off. They can't follow Ulrike and Gerhard without their car, I thought to myself.

It never occurred to me to use the car for my own escape. I parked it in the next dark side street. I continued on foot.

I thought about what I could do. I didn't have an answer. My head felt like it was stuck in a vice. My thoughts moved the way my feet did: slowly, haltingly, unsure. Should I call the others in the nearby flat and warn them? Would I find the number in the telephone book if I could remember the name of the landlord? Could I return to the other flat where I had been hiding out for weeks? Would I find them?

My head was empty except for the idea of the telephone call. I didn't even think about the fact that my friends in the flat were listening to the police radio and would already have been warned. I continued slowly along the street where a police car with flashing blue lights and sirens was coming towards me. I knew it was all over, that I would now be arrested.

Unsure of what to do, I went into a telephone box. I leafed through the telephone book again and again, picked up the receiver, hung up again. Nothing came into my head – no name, no street, nothing at all.

A car stopped next to the telephone box. A man with a pistol in his hand got out and said "Police, your documents." When I reached into my handbag to look for my ID, the policeman grabbed the bag from me and discovered the gun.

Then things became frantic.

The plainclothes men did a body search to look for further weapons. After they had put me in handcuffs, they pushed me into the back seat of the car and took me to the next police station. I was taken into a room and watched over by two policemen with their pistols drawn. One of them searched me again and, when I protested, he said: "Here you have absolutely no say whatsoever." The door went constantly. Men in plain clothes and men in uniform came in to have a look at me. They said: "That's her, the one who killed our colleague." And so I learned that the policeman who had almost caught Ulrike was dead, the other slightly injured. A human being was dead. I had known that that might happen.

After one or two hours they transported me to police headquarters. The hectic to and fro continued there through the night – for the first time in the as yet short history of the RAF a policeman had been shot. Even after it quickly became clear that the shot had not come from my weapon, I was held responsible for the death. The arrest warrant issued against me hours later was for murder and attempted murder.

Already shortly after my arrest, there was speculation that, because of my size, I had to be the Margrit Schiller they were looking for. I heard them saying that my parents were to help them in identifying me. And they did. I didn't expect anything else of them.

The police worked on me for hours, in order to unsettle me with the murder accusation. Who were the other two? Who had shot? Where had I come from and who were my accomplices? They said: "You are a nice, pretty girl, you probably got into the whole thing through a boyfriend. Tell us who the others are, where we can find them and nothing will happen to you. You'll be out in no time." The longer they talked at me and bombarded me with questions, the calmer and more confident I felt. No matter what they did with me, I wouldn't talk. Nothing would make me talk. I thought about the fact that I would now go to prison for ten years or for life. It didn't scare me.

My friends in the RAF had often talked about arrest and prison. The told us what they knew about the experiences of the Tupamaros in Uruguay with torture and imprisonment. About psychological torture and the use of drugs like Pentatol to make prisoners talk. With all that in my head, I nevertheless could never have imagined what an arrest would be like for me, how I would react to torture. I had no idea what it meant to spend years in prison.

Now I had been arrested, I felt no fear. While the police ran around hectically and threw questions at me, I remained calm and silent. I felt a particular calm and seriousness on the inside.

What did I have to lose? I didn't have any plans that being arrested had ruined, I still didn't have the feeling of having done everything wrong. However, I had to think over many things: the events of the past weeks had taken me by surprise, I had gotten in over my head. At some point I had made the step that wasn't right for me and that had thrown everything out of kilter.

They had found an ID card in my handbag. Only the photograph on it was real. After they knew who I was, they wanted to put me on record: photos, fingerprints. I realised that that would help them in their search for my last place of residence and in the police search for my friends. I decided to protest against this in every way I could. Also because I was threatening to become tired after the long night spent in such a tense situation. I needed this confrontation now to stay awake, to draw the lines and to prepare myself for all that was to come.

Several policemen pulled me roughly to a wash basin. I resisted heavily and in the scuffle that followed some tiles were broken. The policemen tried to overcome my resistance, got me in a stranglehold, tore at my hair and tried to open up my fingers that were balled into a fist. When they didn't succeed, they became so angry that they nearly choked me. They even frightened themselves with this and let me go.

I had also had enough and did not offer any more active resistance. When they photographed me I pulled faces to make my face unrecognisable. Although they did make some photos at this point, which they later used for the manhunt, the Hamburg police came up with a plan to make better photographs.

Early in the morning, the warders withdrew suddenly. The door opened and a fat, disgusting man came strolling in with the last of his blonde hair flattened on his bald head. "Good morning, my name is Rollmann, I am a representative in the Bundestag and a friend of your parents", he introduced himself. He said he was a lawyer and that my parents had asked him to help me. He did not actually defend terrorists, he said, but because of his friendship with my parents... So, my parents had nothing better to do than to dump me with one of their CDU guys. I interrupted this flood of words. "There's no way I'm having my lawyer chosen by my parents. Go to hell!" My harsh tone made it clear to him that talking further would have achieved nothing. He snapped shut his briefcase and disappeared.

In the course of the morning, strange preparations suddenly began which made me suspicious. I was taken by lift to the top floor of the high rise police building at Berliner Tor. The policemen surrounding me were tense and seemed to be waiting on something. After about ten minutes they took me one floor down.

The door to a large room was opened and men with cameras and film cameras sprang out at me. I let myself fall. The guards on either side of me hadn't reckoned with this. They got a hold of me in a stranglehold and dragged me by the hair, arms and legs. I struggled wildly, but they hauled me into the large room where more photographers and film cameras were waiting. The pictures from this "public exhibition" were shown on the TV news that evening and were published in all the newspapers the next day.

It was Hamburg Police Chief Guenter Redding's plan to offer me live and without warning to the press so that, with their help, the police could get some good photos for the public manhunt. It reinforced my self-confidence that I had managed to foil their plan.

Because of my resistance, they quickly called off the show. A police doctor came to see whether I had been injured during the police attempt to get photographs. After that they left me in peace until, later in the afternoon, they took me to the remand prison in Holstenglacis.

I entered the prison building hand-cuffed behind my back, wearing trousers and a shirt that were far too short, as I had had to relinquish my own clothes. An old, high building, a cordon of uniformed male and female warders, a long, dark, green corridor with a lot of heavy doors, then a stairway and again a corridor with more doors. The head of the women's department, who wore stiletto heels, a colourful, elegant dress as if she were going to a reception, and heavy make-up, opened a door with one of her many keys and I went into the cell. The door closed behind me, the key turned and the lock snapped into place with a loud click. I looked around. Opposite the door was a high window with bars across it. The window niche showed how thick the old walls were – it was a bunker. The cell was bare apart from a bed, a table, a chair. There was a wash basin and a toilet bowl. That was all. I felt a great sense of anxiety, exhaustion, but also calm. So this was where I was going to spend the next days, months, years.

I took a deep breath. It smelled like autumn. For the last twenty-five years, I have always been overcome by a deep feeling of anxiety whenever I smell the autumn air.

Awakening

In 1966 I was 18 years old and living in Bonn. I left home after doing my Abitur, because I couldn't stand it there any longer. My father was a Major in the military counter-intelligence service (MAD) of the German Bundeswehr. He had always tried to intimidate me with threats and to control everything I did. He robbed me of the air I needed to breathe. My mother was a teacher in adult education and a city councillor in Bonn for the CDU. She was aware that I was moving further and further away from her. Doris, my younger sister of one year, and Dieter, my brother who was two years younger than I, still attended grammar school. When we were children, I had often had to take care of them on my own.

My parents were absolutely against my moving away from home and refused to give me any support at all in doing so. They said I could always come home to eat if I was hungry.

After doing my Abitur, I was unsure about whether I wanted to study and if so, what subject. Everybody recommended I study maths, because I was particularly good at it. But maths had too little to do with people for my taste. Studying maths seemed to me like living in an ivory tower. I wanted to do something that had to do with people. Maybe I should become a doctor, or a nurse? To find out if that was the right direction for me, I worked in the Johanniter Hospital in Bonn for three months and took a course as an assistant nurse. It was impossible to give all of the patients everything they needed. They were looking for warmth and affection, were grateful for every little gesture of kindness, but the nurses did not have any time for conversation and there was nobody else there. The patients were left alone with their worries, the terminally ill were put into single rooms. I sat by their bedsides to listen and to give them the feeling, if only for a few minutes, that they were not alone with their pain. As I was unable to detach myself from what I was experiencing, I even began to dream about the patients in my sleep. The hospital hierarchy made me sick: the doctors, who took all of the most important decisions, but who only saw the patients as a number on a medical record, and the nurses never had time and were always chasing around trying to carry out the orders issued by the doctors. This all made me decide to study psychology.

I rented a room in student accommodation with a friend and matriculated at the university. At that time, the psychology department at the University of Bonn was where things were happening. There were heated discussions about the state of the ossified Federal Republic and about where it was heading. Students demonstrated against the Vietnam War and blockaded the streets. Young men let their hair grow long, something that triggered off fierce outbreaks of anger in the neighbourhood where my parents lived. I looked at all that was happening around me at that time as somebody from the outside looking in. I did go to meetings and demonstrations, but otherwise I lived the typical life of a student: working, reading, debating, preparing for exams, listening to rock music, dancing, experimenting with sex. The *Kinsey Report*, the first large-scale social scientific study of sexuality from the USA was a revelation to me. I found many things in it that I hadn't known about until then, discovered my own sexuality and, for the first time ever, I had a feeling of freedom.

I earned my keep by nursing people who were in need of care. I visited one woman several times a week who was unable to speak or write after having a stroke. This had caused amnesia in the part of her brain that governs speech and she was lightly paralysed on one side. It was my job to teach her to speak, read and write again. She had worked all her life in a large company. She proudly showed me the certificates and commendations she had been given for her work. She had just turned 50 years of age, had no family and nobody visited her apart from me. Her life was infinitely lonely.

I encountered this loneliness again and again when walking through the streets: elderly people who either talked to themselves or to their dog, walking around in their slippers and unkempt. Every time I saw someone like this, it made me sad and angry. Why did these people become so lonely when they retired? Nobody cared for them, because they were no longer of any use to anyone.

I never wanted to live like that.

And I also wanted to learn differently. School had always been torture for me. Every step you took was prescribed by others, relations between the teachers and the pupils were cold and hierarchical. I enjoyed learning at the university. Life there and the way we learned was no longer so regimented and I could choose what, when and how I learned and who I debated with. I practically ate up the largest text books I could find, did not have any problems with learning or with my concentration, which had always been the case during my school years. And, after completing two semesters, I earned money giving statistics tutorials.

I had fierce discussions with my mother, because I didn't want to accept her take on life. She noticed that I refused to accept her values long before I was even aware of this myself. When I was fifteen, I told her that I didn't want to have any children. Before that happened, the world would have to change. My mother was shocked and begged me never to have an abortion if I got pregnant. Before I went that far, I should give the baby to her. That was the last thing I would have done.

At fifteen, I also took my first small step towards independence: I left the church.

My childhood had been oppressive and restrictive. I left the house of my parents with the dull feeling that I had been maimed in some way. I did not want to live like my parents or to end up like them. I didn't want "The teachers are always right". Not the constant worrying about what the neighbours might think. Not the traditional life as a couple and the forced unit of the nuclear family where thinking or feeling differently was seen as a threat.

I did not want my parents' politics either. My mother talked about her party work a lot at home and took us along to CDU meetings. I didn't like the people there and their discussions were of no interest to me.

Since I had moved away from home and had been able to take my life into my own hands, I had tried to shake off the sadness that had accompanied me for years. Sitting together with friends, I talked for nights on end about Sartre, Camus, existentialism, the meaning of life. I got to know all different kinds of people. I liked going out whenever I wanted and being able to meet who I wanted. I studied hard and, every night, went with my girlfriend or alone to a local disco to dance wildly: the music of the Rolling Stones, the Animals, Cream and Janis Joplin, that was my music. After I had danced myself tired, I went back to my student rooms alone.

On television, I watched as the secret police of the Shah of Persia beat up demonstrating students and school pupils in Berlin. During this demonstration against the Shah's visit on 2 June 1967, a policeman shot and killed the student Benno Ohnesorg.

The whole world was in upheaval, the existing order of things was falling apart. In Bolivia, Che Guevara was trying to set up a rural guerrilla force and was killed in the process. In Vietnam, the Viet Cong were organising resistance "in sandals" against the genocide perpetrated by the USA. The photos in *Stern* magazine of the My Lai massacre shocked me: US soldiers had wiped out an entire village, the women, children and the elderly, and had then attempted to blame the massacre on the Viet Cong.

Rudi Dutschke came to Bonn and spoke in front of thousands at the university about student reforms, the emergency laws, the

Vietnam War and rebellion throughout the world. I went to see him speak. This new awakening in society stirred something in me. I was in a process of awakening myself. I still wasn't interested in the historical facts or the global context of this rebellion: I was first of all looking for my own way in life to avoid perishing in the constraints of the old order. And this is exactly what made me a part of the movement without even realising it. Rudi Dutschke was the best-known spokesperson of the Socialist Student Union (SDS), and the Springer Newspaper Group ranted and raved against him at every opportunity. My father and the other people from the area where he lived shared the anger of the *BILD* newspaper: "Demagogues!", "5th column", "Go to the East", "They just want to destroy everything we have built up". When Dutschke was seriously injured in April 1968 by a shot to the head from a sympathiser of the extreme right-wing, I wasn't surprised: the hate against him, against the long hair, the new ideas had unavoidably ended in physical violence.

Even though I felt myself drawn into the student movement, politics was of little interest to me. When Gustav Heinemann was elected as the first SPD politician to become Federal President in March 1969, it didn't really mean anything to me. The Bundestag election in the autumn of '69 which resulted in Willy Brandt becoming the first SPD Chancellor left me cold. Even the enforcement of the emergency laws by the Great Coalition in 1968 didn't affect me in any way. I can remember one fierce discussion between my sister and my boyfriend of that time, a university assistant, about the emergency laws: she was for them, he against them. It was of no importance to me. This level of politics was still abstract, far away.

My family had moved to Bonn when I was ten years old. I had never liked Bonn. I always felt the city to be cramped, full of controls and secretive glances. When my boyfriend, who had joined the newly founded German Communist Party (DKP) in the autumn of 1968, became a professor at the University of Mainz and moved there, I decided to move away from Bonn. I had passed my pre-degree examinations and matriculated at the University of Heidelberg in April 1970. I wanted to do my degree examination there and was able to stay together with my boyfriend, whom my parents rejected.

I didn't know anyone in Heidelberg. I rented a small basement flat from a friendly family and went on long walks along the River Neckar and through the surrounding woodland with my big, black dog – a wild mixture between a giant schnauzer and a hound.

It was difficult to get to know other people and to find friends. The years of uprising in the students', school pupils' and apprentices' movement were over. Things were no longer seething, there were no more debates taking place spontaneously everywhere, which you could join in at any time and get to know people. The SDS, the Socialist Student Union, had been banned in Heidelberg after it had fallen apart on its own in other cities beforehand. In the summer of 1970, the last large demonstration against state oppression took place in Heidelberg. The movement was disintegrating increasingly into small groups and splinter groups, with the different fractions fighting fierce battles against one another with an air of bitter dogmatism, mostly on paper. Many of those who, yesterday, had filed through the streets waving the red flag and banners to protest against the emergency laws, the Vietnam War, the murderous regime of the Shah or against the daily attacks from the Springer newspaper group had gone back to concentrate quietly on their studies.

I felt very lonely. That had been my fundamental feeling in life for as long as I could remember. That was how I had always experienced life to be – everybody forced to battle their way through life, alone.

I knew from the newspapers that there were small groups who, since 1968, had protested against the Vietnam War by setting department stores on fire and carrying out bomb attacks. But this was still a long way off for me.

Once, I drove with my boyfriend to Frankfurt to visit his friend Armin Golzem, a lawyer. Like a lot of those on the left at that time, both of them talked about freeing prisoners and whether this was a legitimate means in the fight for a socialist society. In May 1970, Andreas Baader, who had been in prison for setting fire to a department store, had been freed with the use of force while on guarded leave from prison. Gudrun Ensslin and Ulrike Meinhof had played a role in freeing him. Armin Golzem had become acquainted with Andreas and Gudrun a year before in Frankfurt while they were doing political work with some apprentices. My boyfriend and Armin Golzem did not agree with the action to free Andreas, because an uninvolved passer-by had been shot and injured during it. Both of them were of the opinion that the situation in the Federal Republic did not justify an armed struggle. I listened to them, but said nothing. I didn't like the way they talked about these matters, ironic, derisive, aloof. I was to meet Armin Golzem two years later – as one of my lawyers.

Life as a student was not enough for me: reading, studying, my dog, my boyfriend. However, I didn't know what it was I was looking for. All I knew was that I needed some kind of meaning in my life. I became increasingly aware of what I didn't want: anything that even remotely had to do with my parents, with school, the area of Bonn I grew up in or working in a hospital. I didn't want the control, the fear of anything that was different, the barely hidden aggression, the obsession with order. I started searching.

At the university, I took note of the locations and times of various group meetings from flyers that were posted on the notice board. Then, without knowing anybody, I went to about ten meetings and events organised by different parties and groups - from the

Young Democrats to the leftovers of the SDS. I only ever went to each group once. No matter where I went, the people there didn't interest me.

One day in the autumn of 1970 I found a flyer on the ground. It described the setting up of a 'Release' in Heidelberg, at that time the third project of its kind in West Germany. The people setting up the group were looking for others to help them. The idea of the Release was to help drug addicts get over their heroin addiction by living together with non-addicts. The Heidelberg City Administration had provided a vacant building for the project. However, the association had to finance itself by raising money. It was supposed to become an autonomous, independent, self-managed centre. I went to the meeting that was advertised on the flyer and I liked the people there. They were students, psychologists, a doctor, a nurse. They talked openly and directly with one another making it easy for me to join in.

The building used by the Release was a former printworks. Anybody could live there who wanted to as long as there was enough space. Everybody cooked together and the people who lived there slept together in groups in the large rooms. The basic and day-to-day problems of the people living there and those working there were discussed: how to deal with those who were still secretly shooting up, or whether a jewellery and leather workshop should be set up in order to earn money.

Meeting heroin users revealed a completely new world to me. Most of them had grown up in a totally different environment to me. Many of them had already been in prison. I was hungry to know about other people's histories, about their experiences. They had escaped from "normal" life and had become addicted to heroin in their search for something new and now they were desperately looking for a way out of addiction.

I smoked hash and marijuana for the first time in my life and experienced music in an entirely new way, much more intensely than before. It was the great era of rock groups like Deep Purple, Led Zeppelin and Pink Floyd. However, smoking had the effect on me that I felt even more lonely than before. We went to rock concerts or went walking in the woods, listened to Deep Purple at full volume and smoked. It was nice and terribly lonely at the same time.

I kept my small flat on the banks of the Neckar and spent most of my time in the Release. We talked and discussed all through the night about our lives, our families, our friendships, our sexuality, our plans for the future and our dreams. Escaping, living differently, no longer isolated but in a collective, not just working and slaving away, but sharing everything with one another: both the work and the fun. Jealousy was caused by possessiveness and we didn't want any possessions. Male structures, male dominance were subjects that we discussed over and over again. From one day to the next I ended the relationship with my boyfriend in Mainz, had several new, short affairs – one after another and simultaneously – and went to bed with whom I wanted when I wanted. Not without consequences, because I contracted gonorrhoea more than once. Whenever I walked along the banks of the Neckar to my flat and secretively eyed up the fathers of Heidelberg families I had to grin to myself: if only you knew...

When I lived in the Release, I let others from the centre use my flat: if two of them wanted to spend time alone or if someone was being searched for by the police. In Heidelberg at that time, the police took a hard line against heroin users. They were beaten up publicly by the police and arrested. Drug users who didn't live in the Release were dragged out of their flats along with their belongings, forced on to open-topped trucks with their furniture and then driven by the police out into the country, kilometres away, and left in the middle of a field with everything they owned. Heidelberg's SPD mayor Rolf Zundel wanted "his" town "junkie-free" at all costs. All of the drug users I met had awful stories to tell about dreadful experiences with the police.

This reminded me of something I experienced in the summer of 1970. I was strolling through town one day when I bumped into a small group of students who were running away from helmeted police. The police tore into the students, who were cowering down beneath their batons. I had seen things like this on television, but it was shocking to actually see it for real. I turned round and ran shocked and in tears back to the main road as fast as I could away from such brutality.

Many of the Release members had taken part in the activities of the APO, the non-parliamentary opposition. The told me about street blockades they had organised with school pupils the year before to protest against the public transport price increases in Heidelberg. When, in the USA, four students were shot dead during a protest against the Vietnam War at Kent State University, they reminisced about the flagstones they had thrown in Berlin during militant protests against the ravings of the Springer Group and against court proceedings. But they talked about these things as if they had happened a long time ago. The complicated romantic relationships were more important to them now. A friend came from Munich who had set up one of the first communes there; I liked him and I visited him in Munich with a few friends. The commune consisted of two flats that were one storey apart but connected and situated in an old tenement building with only a few old pieces of furniture, mattresses, coloured cloths on the walls, a lot of black. Most of the inhabitants had been thrown out and my friend was tired and irritated. There was very little left of a spirit of awakening.

Goodbye to my previous life

After a few weeks of living intensively in the Release, I knew that there was no future for me there. Shooting up heroin had never been something to tempt me. I wasn't interested in using it. But I looked on as the friends who had joined the Release at the same time as me to help the heroin users get away from the needle, one by one started fixing up themselves. The concept was turning back on itself: the addicts didn't stop using heroin, but the others were slipping into addiction.

Several friends from the Release were also members of the Socialist Patients' Collective (SPK). This had originally been a self-help group for doctors and patients who rejected the rigid doctor-patient relationships in the University Hospital of Heidelberg and, at the same time, attacked the fossilised university hierarchy. The SPK saw itself as part of a new psychiatry, an antipsychiatry.

Right up until the seventies, psychiatric facilities had acted purely as safekeeping institutions where the mentally ill were kept quiet using medication, but also with physical constraints. There was no human respect for the ill, hardly any therapies that didn't involve psychotropic drugs, and electric shocks were a widely used method of treatment.

Anti-psychiatry tried to take the patient and his/her illness seriously and to find out the causes for mental illness within society. Instead of incapacitating and isolating the ill, anti-psychiatry wanted to give the patient a new social dimension. Their inspiration was the work of Franco Basaglia in Italy who, as the head of a large psychiatric clinic, had closed down the institute step by step together with the doctors and patients. The doctors came down from their pedestal and the patients were gradually handed back the responsibility for their lives in a collective process that involved the entire town.

The SPK saw the existence of closed psychiatric units as an instrument of the state used to exclude and destroy people who lived outside of so-called normality. In contrast to this, the SPK worked under the motto: "The social system is sick". The basic idea was that illness is a person's reaction to a system that makes people ill and the solution lies in destroying this system. This was an idea that, in its simplified notion that illness is a decisive revolutionary force, brought about an extremely fast radicalisation within the SPK.

The SPK used flyers and meetings to attack the Nazi past of psychiatrists and the reactionary politics of the medical and pharmaceutical industry lobby. The regional government of Baden-Wurttemberg and its Minister President, the former Nazi navy judge Hans Filbinger (CDU), forced the conflict to a head: the SPK was banned from the university and the self-help organisation of doctors, students and patients was to be smashed.

When I and my friend Gabi, whom I had met at the Release, went to the SPK for the first time in January 1971, it was already clear that the large flat, which was located in an old tenement block opposite the Heidelberg police headquarters, was going to be forcefully cleared by the police at any time. The flat was observed 24 hours a day.

The walls of the flat were covered in slogans. Large notice boards hung in the hallway with news sheets pinned to them and information on the subjects and dates of SPK meetings and working groups. Flyers were printed on an old printing machine. Gabi explained what was going on in the SPK and what to expect from the meetings, working groups and discussions. There was a Marx working group, a Hegel working group, one on anti-psychiatry and one on the new left-wing analysis of society. I immediately put my name down for one-to-one meetings, which were called "individual agitations" in the SPK.

During these meetings, I felt a great need to talk first of all about me, my life up to now, my insecurities, my fears and my search for something different. At the beginning, this was the only reason I went to the SPK several times a week. During all of this, it became clear to me that my loneliness and sadness and the many problems I had with myself were not my personal and inescapable fate. It was true that my parents, with all of their fears, expectations and disappointments had pressed me into a "form", but it was possible to break out of this mould. I realised that there were lots of people who felt the same way I did, that there were social and political reasons for many things that made people suffer. I understood the Basaglia experiment immediately, because I also had the feeling of having been bound up and paralysed by something that, until now, had been a mystery to me.

I began to be curious about history and politics.

In the SPK, there were books about the Nazi crimes during the Second World War. I read them and was so shocked by what I read that I had difficulty sleeping. It reminded me of one story my father had told my younger sister when she was 13 years old and I was 14. As was often the case after finishing work, he had drunk too much and he boasted about being in Stalingrad and torturing a Russian to death together with other soldiers. It was the only time that he showed this kind of openness about his "memories of the war".

Since moving out of my parents' house, I had begun to remember and to speak about what had happened at home. But it was not until I was in the SPK that I fully realised with what brute force my parents had suppressed my emotions and my sexuality and how that had made me insecure and had paralysed me for many years. I was nine years old the first time I fell in love with a boy a few years older. Every day after school I went home with him under the pretence of wanting to play with his younger sister and waited longingly to see him. I didn't want to see anything else apart from him.

After some time, my mother noticed what was going on with me and tried to put a stop to my feelings by forbidding me to see him. When that didn't succeed, she beat me black and blue. First of all, she sent my younger siblings out to play on the street and then ordered me to undress, and then she beat me so long with knitting needles that my back and legs were covered in weals. At school the next day, everybody questioned me about it. I was ashamed and said nothing. Until this beating, I had been an early developer. I now turned my development around and remained childish for years to come.

Years later, I noticed that my father had strong sexual feelings for me, even though he didn't physically abuse me. His emotions and their intensity had always posed a threat in my mind.

When I started to explore my own body and have sexual dreams, mostly in bed on Sunday mornings when I didn't have to get up early to go to school, my father often came into my room early in the morning, sat beside me, stroked me and disturbed my intimacy. He often played a game with me: he pressed me very closely to his body to prove that I couldn't defend myself if a man tried to rape me. He always found this particularly funny.

As far as he was concerned, I was his possession and he was jealous of every male person I had even the slightest contact with during my entire adolescence. When I was seventeen, he slapped me in the face in front of my first boyfriend and called me a whore. The more my sessions in the SPK made me aware of the connection between my previous inhibitions and the attacks, especially those of my father, the more I felt the need to talk to my parents about it.

I approached the subject the next time I visited them. It took a great deal of effort and courage on my part to break the years of silence and I felt ashamed. When I had finished, my father laughed out loud and said it was nice that he had had such a close relationship with me. My mother admitted that she had always known about my father's "special relationship" with me, that she had been jealous of me for many years and that it had all been very depressing for her. My father's reaction hurt me. I decided to only visit my parents seldom from now on.

After a few weeks, I felt at home in the SPK. I took part in several working groups, put together flyers with the others and printed them on our small machine. I felt good about things and I worked eagerly. We had an old record player on which we repeatedly played the "Ton, Steine, Scherben" song "Macht kaputt, was euch kaputt macht" (Destroy what is destroying you) and sang along with passion to the texts that expressed the way we felt about life. There was always something going on. Small and larger groups held heated discussions about the latest events, the situation in the world, about books or personal matters. We prepared protest activities and demonstrations. One important topic was Salvador Allende's victory and the People's Front in 1970 in Chile. Was it really possible to instigate a revolution through parliamentary elections? Was it even a revolution? Would the large US corporations stand by and accept their property being seized? What was the Chilean military doing? Lenin was quoted during debates: The ruling class will never give up its power without an armed struggle. The Chilean guerrilla organisation MIR supported Allende's government, played a role in legal political work – should they also lay down their weapons? Was it a betrayal by the People's Front not to relinquish their weapons, or treachery against the Chilean people and the revolution if they did give up their weapons?

I joined the Marx working group just as they were in the middle of the first volume of *Das Kapital.* A few of the eight to ten members in the group had been with the SPK for a long time, others had joined more recently. I had never had anything by Karl Marx in my hands before and the terms used in his writings were strange to me. In the roughly two hours that the working group sessions lasted, those who were more knowledgeable explained the Marxist terminology to the new members and, at the same time, we looked for real examples from everyday life or from what we had read in the newspapers, so that we could get an idea of what terms such as "surplus value", "alienation", "means of production" and "relations of production" actually meant in practice. The working group offered us a discussion forum in which everyone tried to take part by offering their own experiences, even those who just happened to chance by. We usually read no more than about one and a half pages at each session, but in a few weeks, I learned so much about "dialectics", the method and contents of Marxist thought, that later, in prison, I was able to study the weighty tomes of Marx's economic theories easily and without help.

I enjoyed going to the various working groups, because I had the feeling that I came to a better understanding of reality there and because I liked the people there, who accepted me as one of them without mistrust. I quickly lost my shyness, felt myself taken seriously and I was full of élan. I learned a lot there, a lot of which was disturbing.

One young woman whom I had seen a few times in the SPK and who was one of the first patients to belong to the group tried to commit suicide. She was checked into the closed psychiatric unit. I went there with a few friends: it was a large, bleak building situated outside of Heidelberg and all of the windows had bars on them, a prison. We wanted to see her, speak to her and get her out of there. But we couldn't get anywhere near her. We were told "only family members". We demanded to speak to the doctor in charge. After being left to wait for what seemed like an eternity, a man with a white coat and glasses came; he was standoffish and short-spoken. He said we couldn't see her, she needed peace and quiet. Talking was senseless. Without having seen her, we returned to Heidelberg.

We were in the middle of the working group on the new left-wing analysis of society and were reading Arno Plack when we heard screams and a ruction going on outside. We ran out into the hallway. A man of about 20 years of age who had been coming to the SPK for a short time was tearing all of the books out of the shelves and smashing the wooden chairs to bits. Others were trying to calm him down while he screamed and threatened to beat them up. Nobody dared to touch him and he returned back into the secretariat. There, he turned over a desk and began to tear everything out of the shelves. I had spoken to him a few times in the past days and he had always been very quiet. He was obviously having a crisis of some sort. He was big and strong, and everybody was afraid to go near him. I was confident enough that I could approach him and calm him down without having to resort to physical measures and went into the secretariat. He looked at me in amazement as I began to talk to him while walking directly towards him. He hesitated for a moment and then let his arms fall to his sides.

It was during this time that I also developed the need to distance myself from men. It seemed to me that their main interest was sex, while I was looking for something else. There was a disparity from the very start. A man, no matter how stupid he was, was always in a position of power. And wherever I went, I always noticed the same thing – no matter what they said, only one thought lingered at the back of men's minds: they wanted to get me into bed as fast as possible. I just wasn't interested in this type of situation any more. With Gabi I shared my feelings, my experiences and my thoughts; she often felt the same way as I did about things. We discovered that we had a lot in common. She also studied Psychology, we read Wilhelm Reich together, we smoked hash together and listened to the same music. We spoke about our pasts, our families, about our fears and our love relationships. She was gentle and headstrong and, like me, she was looking for her path in life. We came to have very tender feelings for one another.

It must have been the beginning of February 1971 when Bernd, a friend of mine from university and from the Release, came to speak to me. He said he was in contact with people he trusted who were in trouble with the police. They needed passports in order to escape the police manhunt for them. There was a woman among them who had my build. He asked if I could give them my passport without reporting it as lost. I didn't hesitate for a second and I didn't ask any questions. I noticed by the way he asked me that he wasn't using my passport for drug users. It was true that I didn't know Bernd all that well, but my intuition, which I had always been able to rely on up to now, told me that he wasn't a grass, that he wasn't a police informer and that he could keep his mouth shut. I didn't ask, but I guessed that my passport was for those who had been organising the armed struggle. I didn't have a clue about it, but I was curious and it attracted me.

At that time, the state referred to the Red Army Faction (RAF) in derogatory tones as the "Baader-Meinhof Gang", but considered them to be so dangerous that, at the end of 1971, the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) set up the B/M special task force to deal with them. The task force was made up of specialists who were determined to make the police machinery omnipresent in the following years. Tens of thousands of people were investigated and countless flats were searched during 1970/71 in the attempt to find members of the RAF. There were police blockades, surveillance on the street and public appeals in the media to identify suspects. Many, most of them young people, remained unimpressed by all this: according to one survey carried out in 1971, every fourth German citizen at my age even sympathised with the RAF to such an extent that they would risk prosecution in order to hide members from the police. Wanted posters hung everywhere in public buildings and in some shops. When they started appearing in Heidelberg, we stole about at night to smash in the windows of shops that had hung up the posters.

It was maybe one week or ten days after this first meeting that Bernd came back again: the people who now had my passport wanted to ask if they could stay in my flat for a few days. During this time, I would have to sleep somewhere else. Once again I said yes without asking any questions, but I didn't feel so easy about it any more. This was going one step further and could mean danger for me. If my passport had been discovered with the RAF, I could always say that I had lost it or that it had been stolen. However, if I provided my flat, that would no longer be possible. Nevertheless, my fear was far smaller than my interest in getting to know people who had decided to live a very different kind of life than anything I had known up to now and I wanted to learn about their struggle.

On the first night, when I had moved somewhere else to let the strangers stay undisturbed at my place, I was so tense I had to puke. I was in the middle of breaking away from the central tenets and values of my upbringing. It had been hammered into me that crime and violence were inherently "evil", that one did not support those that "broke the law", but handed them over to the police. I had no real idea about what I was getting myself into. However, it was clear to me that I was getting into something that would affect my life decisively and that things could get dangerous. I began to take leave from my previous life.

On that first night I slept at Bernd's place. He was kind to me and concerned about me: "I can understand why you have to puke. It makes you giddy when you make contact with the guerrilla from one day to the next. I would love to react the way you are, instead of keeping cool and putting a face on it, as if everything were normal." Bernd said that he wasn't supposed to say who had asked him to provide my flat, but he thought it was better that I know.

We spoke about what it would mean for both of us to let the RAF into our lives. Bernd had a career that he enjoyed and that he didn't want to have to give up for anything. Illegality was out of the question for him. And if anybody discovered that he had contact with the RAF, that would mean losing his job. I had begun to doubt what my studies had to offer. What could I do with my degree? Spend my life rummaging about in the problems of others? "Repair" people so that they could be placed back into working life, which, for me, meant pushing them back into the machinery of exploitation. I had the feeling that I could achieve more to make the future more bearable by other means.

After a few days and nights of living like a vagabond, sometimes at the Release, sometimes at Gabi's place, I told Bernd that I wanted to return to my flat.

When I returned to my flat, Ulrike Meinhof, Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin and Jan-Karl Raspe were sitting there. Although I had taken a detailed look at a wanted poster days before, I didn't recognise any of them.

Gudrun had an attractive afro hairstyle that went well with her slim face and her big eyes. Ulrike came across as small and petite, was wearing a headscarf, smoked one cigarette after the other and was constantly fidgeting with her fingers. Andreas had dyed his hair totally blonde, which was very striking and his black roots were already beginning to show. Jan, a tall, thin guy with a very serious boy's face was standing, leaning against a wall while the others sat or lay on my bed. All four of them had very pale faces, as if they never saw the sunlight. They grinned at me and asked: "So, what do you want to know?" I felt uncomfortable, didn't have any particular questions: "Yeah, well, what you do. I want to get to know you." They wanted to know if I knew who they were, if I recognised them. I shook my head. They asked if they could continue to use my flat. I nodded yes. So these were the people that had triggered off the largest police search in the history of the Federal Republic, whose photos were constantly in the press and whose names were on everybody's lips. I felt myself intimidated by them, but they also made me feel important.

Andreas, who had been silent up to then, now said to me: "To be safe, it's better anyway if you don't get to know us better. And if the pigs ever find out that we were here, it's better for you the less you know." When Andreas talked he came across as assertive, full of energy. They asked whether I knew why they were forming an urban guerrilla, what situation they were in and that being in contact with them could have consequences for me, for example, arrest and prison. I was shy and defiant at the same time and was unable to answer any of their questions precisely. But I insisted on one thing: "If I am going to let you use my flat, then I want to know what I'm getting into." I wanted to get to know them and to find out what they thought, insofar as this was possible.

They sent me out of the room so that they could discuss things among themselves. After some time, they called me back and said they agreed to my terms. There was one condition, however – that I disappeared whenever they had to talk about things that were none of my business. I also wasn't to try and find out who was who among them. Each of them had an assumed name and that had to be enough for me. "What is important is what a person does and not what he is called or where he comes from. We all come from the same old shit, which is why we have decided to fight; it's not the individual that counts, but the group. In making our decision to fight and live a life in illegality, our personal lives have become a function in that fight. What came before doesn't count any more."

They told me that, in Latin America in particular, rural guerrilla groups had formed in the sixties and, in Uruguay, an urban guerrilla. There it was also the case that the members of commando units only knew each other by aliases. If anyone was arrested, then they couldn't reveal the names of the others under torture.

From that point on until June 1971, the four of them and Holger Meins came regularly to my small cellar flat in Uferstrasse. Only seldom did all of them turn up together; they mostly came alone, in twos, or in a group of three to read, to write and to talk. They pored over technical drawings and street maps, cleaned their weapons, or just wanted to relax, chill out and listen to music. They debated, laughed and made jokes with one another. For example, about the fact that Ulrike, who had spent most of her previous life at a typewriter, was now the one who was the fastest and the most skilled at breaking into cars. They all loved Donald Duck comic books and they read them together laughing like children. Andreas and Gudrun could fool about and giggle like teenagers. If there were four or five of them there and they had time, they cooked together. Once Ulrike made Sauerbraten (marinated beef), one of her favourite meals. She was astonished that I didn't know how to prepare meat in this way, as I came from the Rhine region which was practically the home of the Sauerbraten. She seldom drank alcohol, preferring to smoke hash. She said that was much better and that she could stifle the effect it had on her immediately if need be. Sometimes I went to some people I knew to buy her something good to smoke.

I had never encountered people like them before. Almost everything they did and the way they did it was new to me: their political discussions, the way they handled weapons, their jokes, how they spoke to one another and how they treated one another. I had never seen anything like it, either at the Release or in the SPK or anywhere else before that. They seemed to have one common feeling, one wavelength, almost one common head. I wasn't part of their closeness, of their energy, but the strong bond they had with one another affected me strongly.

While they were busy, I often sat at my desk and filled out index cards for the university's Institute of Psychology. Andreas came over, curious, and looked at what I was writing. "Why are you doing crap like that?" "It's my job – I have to live from something." "Can't you look for something better?" "Are you intending to pay me a salary?" Andreas had to laugh. From that moment on he accepted without comment when I sat at the typewriter to type up index cards. Andreas liked having a go at others and provoking them. And he liked getting an equally matched answer back when he did so. If someone gave in to him he got annoyed.

They knew, of course, that I had been going regularly to the SPK since the beginning of the year and that I was involved there. Once, when we were alone, Jan bombarded me with questions about the SPK. What I did there, how I felt there, why I had gone there, what I thought about it. Then he talked a lot about himself, what he had experienced in the student movement and his work in one of the first Kinderladen[1] in Berlin. It was one of the few longer conversations I had with any of them in the first weeks.

Somewhere along the way, my new friends told me that they had come to Heidelberg to make contact with the SPK. This would of course have to take place inconspicuously and under cover. Was I willing to help them? "We first of all considered whether Ulrike should disguise herself with a headscarf and glasses and go directly to the SPK, to Huber. But the whole thing is pretty hot – just imagine, there's a massive police search going on for Ulrike and, right in front of the pigs' headquarters, she marches straight into the most observed building in the whole of Heidelberg. Pretty gutsy. It would be better if you did it, you go in and out of there every day. The only problem is whether Huber will believe you when you tell him what you want. What do you think?" I had my "individual agitations" with Wolfgang Huber and I got on well with him. I at least wanted to try.

The SPK's own process of radicalisation was well underway in the spring of 1971. Everybody was of the opinion that organising against the state and against capital was necessary and legitimate, as was the use of violence. I didn't have a clue, however, that there was already a group within the SPK that had been preparing militant activities.

At my next appointment with Wolfgang Huber, I broached the subject carefully. I rambled on a bit, beating about the bush until I finally came to the point: whether the SPK was perhaps interested in establishing contact with the RAF? Hubert glared at me, warned me with a gesture to say no more and pointed to the telephone next to us. He was convinced that there was a bug in it. Then he took a piece of paper and wrote: "Write down what you want to ask me while talking about something else at the same time." I was suspicious. Write something down? What was he aiming at? That seemed much more dangerous to me than talking. He scribbled on his piece of paper that we would immediately burn everything that we wrote down in the ashtray. That made sense to me and we started writing down our questions and answers on pieces of paper that we pushed back and forward, while Wolfgang talked about illness and its causes in society.

Weeks later, he told me that it was because of my totally naive and emotional reaction of becoming suspicious when he suggested writing things down that had made him believe that I actually did have a message for him from the RAF. I never learned the details of how this contact continued. As the public radicalisation of the SPK had increased the police interest in anybody who regularly visited the SPK, my new friends asked me to step back a little: if I was screened, it would become impossible for them to use my flat any longer.

I never knew whether or when my six "flatmates" would turn up at my place. They didn't have a key. They didn't want to have one, to avoid my flat being detected if one of them got arrested. That's why we arranged that they only came by in the evenings or at night, as I was almost certain to be home then. They were so careful when entering and leaving the cellar in Uferstrasse that my landlord had no idea of my new, irregular guests. But I wasn't able to bring any friends home any more.

This hit me the hardest with Gabi. I told her, "There are people at my place who wouldn't approve..." Gabi noticed I was turning into another person. It was clear to her that I wasn't hiding another love interest from her. She didn't ask me, but we both knew that she had some idea about what direction I was moving in. The question concerning organising illegal activities was dealt with pretty openly in Heidelberg in those days, at least in the SPK. She made it clear that that wasn't what she wanted, that she was afraid of it. I respected that and it changed nothing in our friendship.

One day Gudrun asked me about Gabi. She had noticed that I had a special relationship with her: "Are you intimate with one another, I mean, physically?" When I hesitantly answered yes, Gudrun told me that some of the female RAF comrades had lesbian relationships and that everybody was ok with it. The student uprisings and the first moves towards autonomous organisation among women had also led to attempts at living a different kind of life with new values and ideas. The women were often ahead of the men in this process of accepting and living out their feelings. New forms of organising their lives and a new understanding had come about. I was amazed at how openly Gudrun talked about everything and I liked it. I felt that my experiences and my feelings were ok.

The newspapers, especially *Bild*[2], were tripping over themselves to publish defamatory articles about women in the RAF: they were all viragos gone mad, authoritarian, mad about weapons, lesbian, hard, callous and slaves to Andreas. They even spread the lie that Ulrike had died of a brain tumour. They said Ulrike had committed suicide because she was in despair at differences within the group. The stories they made up were endless, nasty, unbelievable. They had nothing to do with the people in my apartment who were completely different. Why was the hate against the women so strong? I spoke to Gudrun and Ulrike about it. "When women rise up and fight forcefully, this shakes the system to its foundations: women are the basis for reproduction in the system. Women are supposed to be passive, acquiescent, accessible and make sure that everything stays on an even keel. Women who break out of the mould, who refuse to play their role or who even take up weapons are not allowed to exist. That's why they hate us so much."

Ulrike got really upset about the headlines stating she had committed suicide because of differences within the group: "Those bastards, that's *their* projection, that's the way things are with *them*! They're willing to use any of their CIA tricks to undermine us. They follow the same pattern all over the world to make revolutionaries seem implausible and to make them sound like nutters."

I don't know what the friends did when they were not sitting at my place. I had a vague idea of their goal of achieving a totally different, fair society which could only be done using illegal methods. That is why they had weapons, stole cars, robbed banks and, under no circumstances, could be caught by the police and arrested. They didn't try and talk me into fighting their fight by the same means. But they asked if I was willing to rent a flat for them in another town. I agreed to do it. At that time, RAF members mainly lived in flats that were rented by people who weren't suspected by the police. As part of its investigation work on the guerrilla, the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) checked up on the legality of flats over widespread areas, making sure that the people who rented the flats were properly registered according to the law.[3]

Gudrun and Andreas stayed at my flat to look after my dog. They weren't very pleased about it, but what was I supposed to do with him? I went by train to Hamburg. Holger Meins picked me up at the station and brought me to a small hotel. We bought a pile of newspapers with sections advertising flats. He told me that flats in high-rise complexes best suited their needs. Nobody who lived there knew what went on in neighbouring flats and people could come and go all the time without anybody who lived there being particularly interested. We soon found a suitable flat on Mexicoring in the City Nord district, a fast growing area on the outskirts where office buildings and several residential blocks had shot up. "That's exactly what we're looking for" Holger grinned, "Andreas and Ulrike can stand in the lift next to a wanted poster without their make-up and nobody will recognise them. The people who live there are too busy thinking about their stress at work or their problems with their old lady and the kids." I liked his dry sense of humour and his way of saying things to the point in short and snappy sentences. "OK, call the number and tell them you want to look at the flat."

The next day - it was the beginning of March 1971 - I went to the offices of the housing association. I was wearing a skirt, had put on some make-up and tied my hair back into a neat ponytail. "You should come across as uninteresting, boring, like a secretary", Holger said, and he gave me some money. One of the people from the housing association came with me to the flat at Mexicoring and I told him that I was starting work in Hamburg in April and therefore had to move away from Heidelberg to Hamburg. While we were on our way there, I kept a constant lookout to see whether the police were following us or if anything untoward happened, as Holger had impressed upon me. It seemed absurd to me to watch out for possible police observation. I wouldn't even recognise them unless they were two feet behind me in a marked car. The flat was a small, one-roomed apartment. I signed the rental contract and assured him I would pay the rent every month punctually by postal order. I went with my ID card to the residents registration office to register Hamburg as my second place of residence.[4] I was only to enter the flat on Mexicoring on one other occasion, four months later, after I had burned my ID documents and personal papers and become illegal.

After that, Holger came to my place in Heidelberg a few times and stayed the whole night. We felt good together. The first time I met him in my flat, I could see in his eyes that he liked me. And I thought at that time: "So, just like all the other guys, only interested in outward appearances." Then I found out that he thought about me in a way that nobody else in the group did and that he tried to understand who I was and what it was I needed. He was a very visual person who had the special talent of concentrating on the moment. When I was with him, I had a feeling of freedom that had been previously unknown to me. When I was with him, I felt good, when he wasn't there, I didn't miss him. For his part, he knew I had other love interests and he showed no signs of jealousy or possessiveness. I liked that. I hated jealousy and I hated it when somebody thought I belonged to them.

What particularly attracted me to the RAF comrades was their absolute seriousness. They lived what they talked about, they didn't play games. What they said and what they did were one. I still couldn't fully understand the political dimension of what they believed in, but I was fascinated by their commitment to their cause. Gudrun later referred to this as "deeply-felt free will". I looked on intrigued by the way they argued with one another with an openness and directness I had never experienced or at the way the fought for themselves and for everyone in the group.

One afternoon, Andreas, Gudrun and Jan came together to my flat. I was listening to music and reading at the time. All three were tense. They had been practising shooting in the forest and, in exercises like this, each of them had a special task assigned to them: Andreas was responsible for the stolen car and the machine gun that was always within hand's reach during car journeys. Jan was in charge of keeping a lookout and securing the "shooting range", and Gudrun was supposed to make sure that nothing was left behind when they were finished. When they came into the flat and emptied their bags, Gudrun saw that Andreas' pistol was missing. They had left it behind in the forest and Andreas was furious. Now they would have to go out again to retrieve the weapon, which had maybe even already been discovered by someone else. Andreas put the blame on Gudrun, saying she was good for nothing: "You're a complete idiot, what do you have a head for? If we come up against a road block now, I'll have to let them shoot me." Gudrun was absolutely calm. Andreas screamed on and I was afraid that he was going to hit Gudrun at any moment. Gudrun said nothing, but cringed in the face of this barrage of insults and his threatening behaviour.

I was shocked by this scene and I was angry with Andreas for his screaming and his threats. I was immediately on Gudrun's side: "Leave her alone!", I shouted at Andreas. Later, Gudrun took me aside. "Andreas screwed up too, he's responsible for his own gun. And then all that screaming – what a waste of energy. But, do you know, the worst thing of all for me is that I put up with it. I should have argued back at least. It was crap of me just to give in to him and not to react. Do you know what I mean?" I didn't really understand.

When Andreas discovered somebody had made a mistake he could be very fierce and insulting. He himself lived according to the criteria by which he criticised others, which is why everyone in the group accepted his sharp tongue and his outbreaks of temper. At that time, I still couldn't have any idea about how hard it would be for me at a later date to deal with his criticism.

One night Andreas and another member of the group came to my place. They had been out and about, stealing cars. While they were in the middle of trying to break into one, a policeman suddenly came on the scene – with his gun drawn.[5] Andreas, who had remained in the car they had brought along in order to keep a lookout, got out of the car silently, snuck up behind the policeman with his own pistol drawn, threatened him and shouted to the other guy: "Quick, get out of here!" Both of them ran to the car, Andreas took the first steps going backwards with his pistol still pointed at the policeman. Then they jumped into the car and sped off. No shots were fired.

Now both of them were sitting panting breathlessly in my flat. They repeatedly went over to the window and nervously looked down at the street. Andreas was furious. He accused the other guy of capitulating: "Why didn't you draw your weapon? Or throw yourself behind the car? Or both?" He turned towards me: "Just stood there like some stupid animal waiting to be harnessed." Then back to the other guy: "What's wrong with you? Do you want to fight, or what do you want? The pig could have got you easily. How are we supposed to rely on a guy like you who cowers down like a scared dog when it matters? You have to sort out what's wrong with you." Andreas sat down and then jumped up again in a fit of temper. The other guy lit up one Gauloise after the other and didn't say anything. He must have felt like shit.

The use of weapons was discussed again and again. When was it OK to shoot and at whom? This question began to be discussed intensely when a man was seriously injured during the operation that freed Andreas from prison in May 1970. Ulrike in particular dealt with the limits to her own use of violence over and over again in public declarations. In the first RAF written manifesto *The Urban Guerrilla Concept*, which had mainly been drawn up by Ulrike, she gave an emphatic no as the answer to the question that was often asked as to whether the action to free Andreas would have gone the same way if those freeing him had foreseen injury or death for people on the sidelines.

However, this paper did not appear until eleven months after Andreas had been freed, meaning that many on the left had already formed their opinion about the RAF, as I had seen with my boyfriend and Armin Golzem. Far more present in their and others' memories was the declaration Ulrike had made on tape three weeks after Andreas had been freed, in which she said: "...we say the cops are swine, we say a man in uniform's a pig, not a human being, so we must tackle him. I mean we mustn't talk to him... of course there may be shooting."

One day, Ulrike came alone. She had her typewriter and a great pile of papers with her and she sat down and began to write. She worked day and night, almost without sleep. She chain-smoked and drank coffee by the litre. The restlessness with which she typed down one page after another impressed me. I would never have been able to work like that and I didn't know anyone who had the same determination and concentration as she did in finishing a piece of work. She gave me a few pages to read: "I want to hear what you think about it." The title was: *The Urban Guerrilla Concept* and I plodded my way through the text. It took a lot of effort on my part to understand what was written there. When I was finished, I handed the sheets back to her and said: "I think it's very good." Ulrike was annoyed. "I don't want to hear compliments, shit, I want to know your opinion." That was something I was unable to do.

Ulrike and Andreas debated for hours on end about the text, argued with one another, but also laughed together. They enjoyed measuring themselves against each other and discussed things fiercely. If Ulrike felt that Andreas had attacked her too heftily, she snapped at him: "Then you write it!" And he laughed at her: "You know quite well that I can't express things the way you can. I have a good idea of what has to be said, but nobody can write it except you."

When the friends debated, things usually got pretty heavy, like a wrestling match. In this way, they drove each other to think more sharply and to express their thoughts more precisely. Andreas in particular was restless, always searching for something, he couldn't stay in the same place from one second to the next, his head full of ideas.

I asked Ulrike about the paragraph on freeing Andreas. Yes, Ulrike said, the answer to the question that is so often asked of us must be given. It had been a mistake to pass on the tape recording with the sentence "...and, of course, shooting is allowed" on it, without having discussed it one more time beforehand.

In *The Urban Guerrilla Concept* there are paragraphs that I especially liked, for example: "The self-confidence of the student movement did not come from the class struggle but from the realisation of being part of an international movement in which we are being confronted with exactly the same enemy here as the Vietcong confronts over there – the same paper tigers, the same pigs." And: "We refuse to rely on some spontaneous anti-fascist mobilisation in the face of this kind of State terror and fascism. We also don't believe that choosing a path of legality necessarily leads to corruption. We are aware that our political practice can deliver similar pretexts for intolerance and oppression.... Another excuse for intolerance towards us is that we are communists. Any progressive change is dependent on the organisation and struggle of communists. Therefore, whether terror and repression just cause fear and resignation or provoke armed resistance, class hatred and solidarity. Whether things will all go smoothly for the State imperialist strategy or take a different course. All these things are dependent upon whether communists are stupid enough to just lie down and let things happen to them or whether they are willing to use the legal means available for the purposes of organising the illegal struggle – as opposed to what they are doing at the moment, which is to make out that the armed struggle is just some sort of fetish or fad."

The text referred in several places to the Black Panthers in the USA and, because they were mentioned so often during discussions, especially by Gudrun, I asked her about them one time when we were alone. Gudrun told me that there was a solidarity network in West Germany for GIs whom she had worked with in the sixties. She organised flats, papers, money, illegal border crossings for GIs who had deserted because they didn't want to fight in Vietnam. She came across black soldiers who were Black Panthers and who were trying to organise resistance within the US Army. During discussions with these Black Panthers, who brought out an illegal newspaper, she found out more about the history and the ideas of the black organisations in the USA. The forced breaking up of the Black Panthers had given rise to a black guerrilla, the Black Liberation Army. There was also another guerrilla organisation, the Weathermen, which, like the RAF, had developed from out of the student movement and the protests against the Vietnam War. Gudrun said she would love to fly to the USA and meet up with the Weathermen. "We think that their development is very similar to ours. The Weathermen and we from the RAF have come to have very similar ideas and practices, because certain conditions are the same. West Germany and the USA are today the most highly-developed industrial centres with a strong workers' aristocracy and corrupt trade union leadership. There, as well as here, neo-fascism, consumption terror and media control are widespread."

From Gudrun, I learned that, in Europe, the most intense discussions were taking place among the Italian comrades, many of whom had left the traditionally strong Communist Party and some of whom had begun to organise an armed political movement. Their ideas were aimed primarily at the already existing broad Italian workers' movement. Those who saw themselves more in an internationalist context, as the RAF did, rejected the carrying out of armed activities by urban guerrillas at the present time. That had been a hard blow for them. Gudrun, Ulrike and Andreas often spoke about their journeys through Italy, where they had taken part in many discussions. I can't remember any of the details of these discussions, because, at that time, I had difficulty following the gist of what they spoke about.

There was one other excerpt that I liked in the RAF paper, where the quote from Lenin: "The working classes are shaken by the wretchedness of life in Russia. What we have not figured out, as yet, is a way of collecting every drop and trickle of this resentment..." is used to relate to the situation at that time in West Germany: "In fact, the only group up to now that has succeeded in collecting 'every drop and trickle' of the wretchedness of life in Germany has been the Springer Corporation, which then managed to compound this misery even more."

On the afternoon of 30 April 1971, Jan and Holger came in with a thick bundle of *The Urban Guerrilla Concept*. The symbol of the RAF, the three letters above a machine gun, stood out and the text had been printed on good quality paper. I liked it a lot. Both of them were glowing with pride and joy. Jan told me that the newspaper was to be distributed at the first of May demo the next day. "Do you think you could lay a bundle of them at the uni without anybody seeing you? You have to avoid your fingerprints being on them at all costs. The best thing would be to take them wrapped in newspaper and then, when you have laid them down, pull the newspaper away carefully. Others will be distributing them in different places at the same time. Everything has to happen at the same time so that nobody gets caught. You have to lay them down at exactly the right moment – not a minute too soon or too late." I was as proud of the newspaper as if I had contributed to its writing myself. The top one was my copy and, in the evening, I sat down and read it once again in peace and quiet. Of course I wanted to help distribute them. The next morning, excited, I left the house with my bundle wrapped up in a plastic bag. When I got to the uni, I was far too early. I wandered around for a while, my heart racing, and my hands began to shake. Finally, the time came to lay down the bundle. I hesitated: should I hang around nearby to see what happened? My nervousness won the day. I had the feeling that everybody could see that I was laying down a bundle of forbidden newspapers there. I walked around a little and then returned to my flat.

I continued to go to the SPK, to the work groups, to take part in discussions and to offer my support against the imminent ban of the SPK. I took part in the night watches, which were designed to fend off a surprise evacuation by the police. For nights on end, we discussed the imperialistic system and its devastating consequences. I discovered that the US troops were involved in a brutal war, not only in Vietnam, because they believed they had the right to decide what other peoples had to think and how they should live their lives. The history of US interventions throughout the world was a long one, one of which I had almost no idea up to now. Why did I know so little about it? Why had there been so little resistance against it? In order to justify that 30,000 US soldiers march into the Dominican Republic, US President Johnson had declared: "We cannot and will not permit the establishment of another Communist government in the Western Hemisphere!" They always dragged out the word democracy, but when it came to their economic and political interests, they turned up with bombs, tanks and torturers. I noticed how hate and fury welled up in me: I had been lied to all my life. Now I was discovering the causes and the contexts of historical events and I wanted to do something about it.

To take the strength to fight from suffering was something I could identify with. To pick up my loneliness and desperation like a stone and hurl it against the root causes. The cause lay in capitalist society. We considered illness to be a central definition of revolutionary ideas: "Turn illness into a weapon!" was the slogan of the SPK. At one demonstration in the centre of Heidelberg against the Vietnam War and the invasion of Cambodia by US troops, the speakers were talking one after the other about the situation in Vietnam, the Vietcong's struggle and the crimes of the US troops, when I suddenly grabbed the microphone and shouted: "And what's with our struggle here at home? Why do you always talk about the others and not about the revolution here in Europe?" The language we used in our pamphlets was becoming increasingly radical. The revolution had to come today and anybody who didn't understand this was an idiot or an exploiter. We disdained all of those on the left who didn't see things the way we did.

Through the SPK and the RAF, I had come to know a very different kind of life in a short space of time. There was lots I couldn't talk about, to avoid putting anyone at risk. Andreas, Gudrun, Ulrike and Holger warned me when they thought I wasn't being cautious enough. They were the most sought-after "criminals" in West Germany and they had been using my flat for weeks. Nobody was allowed to visit me at home any more, because I never knew if and when they would turn up. I was supposed to be suspicious of every new person I met and, if possible, tell nobody what my name was or where I lived. I distanced myself from my landlord, whose window I had to pass by to get into my own flat. I found it difficult to keep to these precautionary measures, feeling that they restricted my freedom. However, I saw the necessity for them and kept to the rules.

Not only Gabi, but also other people who knew me noticed what was going on with me. One friend from university whom I really liked surprised me one day with a proposal of marriage: "Let's get married, finish of our studies together and then have children." That was exactly what I didn't want and, after he had expressed his three wishes, this became more apparent to me than ever before. My other way, my new path in life was already closer. I didn't know where it would take me, it could end in prison or death, but, for the first time in my life, I had the feeling that I was living my life the way I wanted to.

I wasn't given very much time to think this through. All of a sudden, things heated up and events took on their own momentum. At the end of June 1971, there was a shootout with the police on a piece of woodland outside of Heidelberg. Several members of the SPK were arrested.

We organised our last meeting, in which we appealed for the armed struggle. We regarded the arrest of around eight SPK members as an arbitrary act of retaliation by the police and, to demonstrate how we felt about it, some of us tore the photos out of our ID cards and replaced them with photos of Che or Ho Chi Minh. We shouted: "Maler, Meinhof, Baader – that is our cadre!" and we used this event to call for the setting up of illegal structures. We read out loud from the RAF's *Urban Guerrilla*: "The class analysis that we need is impossible without revolutionary practice, without a revolutionary initiative." We shouted these slogans in the university lecture theatre, without having any real idea about what we were propagating. The process of radicalisation in the SPK had happened extremely fast. Our willingness to act, our conviction that the political could not be separated from the personal, found their direct expression in the slogans: "Destroy what destroys you" or "Throw your kidney stones at the banks!"[6]

July saw the second wave of arrests. The SPK was forced to disband. A police observation car suddenly appeared in front of my flat. My friends from the RAF had already taken their leave from me days before the shootout took place.

I reconsidered my options. Completing my studies didn't seem to make any sense. The SPK had broken up, the people I liked had either gone underground or had been arrested. The same could happen to me if it were discovered that I had rented a flat in Hamburg for the RAF. If the police checked my papers, they would find out that I had entered a second place of residence in my ID card. I didn't want to just hang about my flat and wait to be arrested. I had said goodbye to my past, my parents, friends, my previous life. All I had now was the RAF.

I went to Bernd and told him that I wanted to burn all bridges to my previous life and that I wanted to join the RAF. With some uncertainty, but nevertheless respecting my decision, he tried to hold me back: "Aren't you afraid? There are other possibilities to do something. If the cops find out about the flat in Hamburg, you'll get a few months in the nick. That's crap, no doubt about it, but don't you realise what'll happen if you go the other way? The shootouts, arrests, going down for a long time. Is that what you want?" Afraid? Unlike him, I had no fear. Instead, I felt strong in a way previously unknown to me.

I spoke with Gabi. We agreed that she would move everything out of my flat gradually and discreetly. At some point, she would then tell my landlord that I had had a bad accident and wasn't coming back. Gabi and I burned all my photos, personal belongings and letters in the toilet. I knew where my life was now taking me: to Hamburg and the flat on Mexicoring.

Going underground

On the very same day, Holger Meins came to the flat on Mexicoring. The RAF had not been using it for some time now. The comrades weren't sure whether I would maybe be checked by the police and arrested. Because of this, they were in the process of vacating the flat.

Holger brought me to another flat. After a while, Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin came by to talk to me. The curtains, long swathes of dark cloth, were drawn across the windows, and we were sitting in the semi-darkness. Neither of them seemed very pleased to see me there and Andreas came straight to the point: "So tell us what it is you want. What were you thinking of, just turning up here like that?" I told them that the police had been watching my flat and that I had expected to be arrested at any time. I thought that would seem like an acceptable reason to him, but he wanted to hear more: "What do you think you can do here, with us. Is there anything you can do that seems like a good idea to you?" I didn't have a clue. "Then tell us what you think about us politically. What is your analysis of the situation? Tell us." When I wasn't even able to say two words on this subject, Andreas got really annoyed.

He walked back and forth, smoked Gauloises and ranted: "You're a silly woman, do you think you can just turn up here and become one of us? Who do you think we are? Do you think what we do is child's play? Don't tell me you've got nothing else in your head than that!" However, I really hadn't given much more thought to the matter and, when this became clear to him after endless to-ing and fro-ing, he said, irritated and furious: "If there wasn't something real they could arrest you for, we would send you back to Heidelberg today. What are we supposed to with you now? For fuck's sake, this is going to cause nothing but problems."

He was right, but at that moment, I didn't realise it.

I stayed at that flat for a few days until Holger came and picked me up. We drove to Frankfurt. There we lived in an illegal flat with a woman who worked together with the RAF. At night, Holger and I went out and he showed me how to find cars to steal. They had to be parked in dark places. The parking space had to be at some distance from any blocks of flats from where the theft could be observed, and also far away from a police station, as the police could be at the scene of the crime quickly if warned. You also had to be familiar with when the police did their nightly rounds in the area.

Holger showed me the tools he used to break into cars: there was a kind of corkscrew with two screw threads that were welded together in opposite directions to one another. After breaking into the car, you inserted this into the ignition and twisted it out completely, quickly and without needing much force.

We spoke about the fact that Holger had a weapon, but I didn't. He thought it was a bad idea to be out together under these conditions. However, I wasn't supposed to have a weapon for the meantime. Holger told me that, if the police turned up, I had to throw myself on to the ground immediately and not move an inch. I would then be arrested, but wouldn't get more than a few months in prison. I wasn't that eager to carry a weapon.

After a few days, we returned to Hamburg. When we got there, I learned from Ulrike Meinhof that another three people from the SPK had turned up after leaving Heidelberg because they wanted to carry out illegal activities. Ulrike suggested that the other three and I form our own unit. The other SPK members didn't have any more idea about what to do or more experience than I did. The RAF thought it would be better if we developed our own thing. They would help us.

I knew the three from the SPK, but hadn't had much to do with them up to then. We were allocated a flat by the RAF where the four of us lived. It was cramped there and we sat around together not really knowing what we should do with one another. None of us had a clear idea about how to proceed. We were "legal illegals", still running around with our own ID cards. The comrades from the RAF had hoped we could get something together. It is true that all four of us came from the SPK, but we hardly knew each other and, thrown together in this situation, nothing really happened between us. We three women found the only guy among us a bit of an idiot, but that didn't bring us any closer together.

Ulrike visited us with Carmen Roll. She gave us some money and said: "That is revolutionary money, and I want to know exactly what you spend it on, it's not to be squandered." Ulrike was strict, assertive and impatient. Things went easier with Carmen. We knew her from the SPK. She was a round bundle of energy, cheeky and witty. Both women advised us to travel and walk around Hamburg systematically using a city map so that we could become familiar with the city we were living in. Ulrike said we should start breaking into cars and told us what places and what parts of town were best.

After that, we often went out in twos. We walked and walked until our feet hurt, looking for fast cars. Ulrike brought us the 'corkscrew' and, using an old ignition lock she had brought with her, she showed us how it worked and how we could jump start cars. We went to search for a 'double' of the car we wanted to steal: a car of the same make, colour, design and construction year. When we had found it, we had to find out the car owner's details. We called the motor vehicle registration office saying we were from the automobile inspections department and they should give us all of the information they had on the car owner. This information was needed for the vehicle documents. Ulrike checked out the place we had chosen to make sure we hadn't made any mistakes. We now needed a quiet place, a garage was best, to keep the car in right after we had stolen it. We also needed a car we could use for a getaway, in case anything went wrong. The RAF gave us this car "on loan". We could listen to the police radio in it and so hear early on if we had been discovered by someone and reported to the police. We got a hold of fine, thin gloves which we could wear and still work well, without leaving fingerprints.

When the time finally came and we left the flat as a group of three, I was totally nervous. Two of us crept up to the car we had picked out – the only one we stole at that time – while I parked our getaway car nearby where the others could see me. It seemed like an eternity until they opened the small side window with the thin piece of wire. All of a sudden, another car drove by and the two of them had to throw themselves behind 'our' car. After they were finally in the car, everything went very fast. They drove ahead of me to the agreed place, a quiet dead end street in another part of town and I followed. We unscrewed the number plates and put on new ones we had stolen from another car some time before. Next day we bought a new ignition lock and, after making sure that the stolen car wasn't under observation, we installed the new part. The car was moved every day to avoid being noticed.

Even after our first joint action, things didn't really pick up between the four of us. No conversations took place, we didn't come up with anything we wanted to do together and we had no ideas for joint action.

One day we sat down with Jan-Carl Raspe. We were talking about how to get hold of money. "It has to be clear that we won't keep giving you money for ever. You have to get on your own feet. Have you thought about it? There are various possibilities: money transporter, cash messenger from a supermarket, bank", Jan said. "You have to look at what you think you could manage, and see if it's OK for you." He suggested looking around in the Greater Hamburg area, maybe Hildesheim. The RAF had already begun to check out the opportunities there and could give us a few tips. "No matter what you decide, you always have to work using the city map. Where is the next cop shop, how long do they need to get to where you are if somebody warns them. The most important thing is your escape route, where can you park the getaway car during the whole thing, how can you hide from view immediately, where can you change cars without being noticed and where to keep the money." These were the basic rules for money-getting activities.

We travelled alternately to Hildesheim in groups of two. We left by train early in the morning. If possible, we should get going right after getting up, we had been told, and throw the tickets away immediately so that, if you get arrested, nobody knows where you've come from. We got on to the train at Hamburg-Harburg, travelled to somewhere near Hanover or out to the suburbs and, from there, we travelled in the direction of Hildesheim. It was getting towards the end of the summer and was always very warm when we arrived in Hildesheim around midday. Out first target was the main checkout of a department store. We tried to find out if there were any regularities when transporting the takings. Jan has said that the money from the main checkout was often brought to the bank at midday and the messenger who brought it always used one particular staircase which led from the personnel department to the street. One of us took up position as discreetly as possible on the other side of the street, opposite the entrance, from where the staircase could be viewed, and waited there for half an hour. We weren't to hang around any longer than that to avoid arousing suspicion. We did this on several days, but found out nothing. And we couldn't continue like this, because everything was so complicated: the long journey from Hamburg and we didn't know anyone in Hildesheim who could give us some information or help us. Observing the department store from the street became too obvious after some time and therefore too risky. So we began checking out banks. I often left Hamburg in the morning, returning in the evenings feeling tired and frustrated. Finally, we found a bank that seemed suitable for a robbery: the cash desk only had a very low glass surrounding which would be easy to jump over, there was obviously a lot of money behind the counter, the police station was at quite a distance, and there were various getaway routes. We told the RAF about our observations and one of them travelled to Hildesheim to make sure we hadn't overlooked anything. The next step was to rent a flat. I often went to Hildesheim alone or with one of the women from our small "group". We went to flat-finding organisations and took a look at the local newspapers for accommodation being advertised.

Travelling by train so much was a pain. I often felt tired, and chewed endlessly on gummy bears that ruined my teeth. I couldn't envision any goal that gave some sense to what we were doing. My head was empty, I had no imagination. Everything was grey.

In-between times we travelled to our home towns to keep up contact with our friends and to seek support for an illegal organisation. I visited my parents in Bonn so that they wouldn't go looking for me in Heidelberg. I also saw a few old friends, but I had already known beforehand that none of them would take the same path as me. I asked them what they were doing, but only listened half-heartedly to their answers. I said almost nothing about what I was doing and left again pretty soon.

The Tagesschau[7] declares me a member of the RAF

Throughout the summer of 1971, the police had arrested several members of the RAF and had uncovered some of their flats. Using the documents found in the various flats, the investigators had found out that the RAF moved around mainly in the north and west of West Germany, as well as in West Berlin. Because of this, the friends came up with a plan: in order to draw attention away from an increased focus of the investigations on Hamburg, the Ruhr region and West Berlin, the idea was to lay false trails that lead to other parts of West Germany. In the middle of September, a stolen BMW with fingerprints from Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof on it was to be abandoned in the vicinity of Freiburg, exactly because that was an area where the RAF was not active at that time. The BMW was to be accompanied by a second car to make sure the driver of the first one got away safely.

The comrades were looking for a driver for the BMW who lived in another city under similar conditions to me. They asked me if I would drive the second car, a Volkswagen that had been hired under a false name. It didn't seem problematic to anyone to use a car that wasn't stolen, but legal, because the whole thing was seen to be uncomplicated: two cars drive somewhere, one is abandoned as if it had a breakdown, both drivers disappear using the second car without being discovered. It all seemed routine stuff, which is why some important basic rules were not observed.

After I had been told what I had to do, I agreed. I was to take a pistol with me in case we were stopped by the police. I took the gun, although I had never held a weapon up until that point. They explained briefly how to use it, with the trigger in release position, ready to use. I put it into my handbag next to my ID papers, which I always carried in my purse.

Nobody came up with the idea of providing us with false documents, in case we did get stopped by the police. It's true that I wasn't yet officially being searched for by the police, but I was on the BKA's so-called List of Sympathisers and had been living "illegally" since August, that is, I was no longer properly registered with the police.

In the late afternoon of 25 September 1971, we drove off and, some time after midnight, we reached our agreed destination, the Bremgarten car park on the Frankfurt – Basel motorway. The comrade ahead of me switched off his engine and let the BMW roll until it stopped at the left-hand edge of the car park surface and then switched the lights off. Stopping on the left-hand edge of the car park was a deliberate tactic, as this was against traffic regulations, meaning that the car would be noticed quickly by the regular traffic police controls.

I stopped the Volkswagen about fifteen metres behind the BMW – also on the wrong side of the road, thinking nothing of it.

I had hardly switched off the ignition and the lights when I suddenly saw a pair of headlights approaching me from behind. They came closer gradually and stopped behind my Volkswagen. The lights remained on, the passenger door opened, and a policeman in uniform got out: "Oh, shit!" I thought. One minute was all we would have needed to leave the BMW standing and get out of there. In exactly that minute, the pigs arrived.

The policeman stood next to my door with a torch in his hand: "Can I see your driver's license and vehicle documents. Is there a problem with the car, or why are you standing on the wrong side of the road?" I had already turned down the side window. I stuttered something, reached for my handbag, fumbling with my shaking hands past the pistol in it, found my driver's license and handed it out the window. The other policeman walked by: "There's something not right here. Someone is sitting in the BMW up front. Why do neither of them have their lights on?" I can't remember precisely what happened in the minutes that followed.

I only know that the policeman next to me shouted something, shots rang out, and he was torn out of my field of vision. Glass was breaking around me. A bullet had missed me by centimetres and the front and back windscreens had shattered. The driver's door was torn open and the guy I had come with screamed: "Come on, we have to get out of here!" I stumbled after him across the car park. We ducked down to avoid the bullets being shot at us and hastened through the bushes at the side of the road. I had never run so long or so fast in my life. We ran across fields and through bushes in an area we were not familiar with and we couldn't tell which direction we were going in, because of the darkness. Whenever we saw headlights from afar, we threw ourselves to the ground. My heart was racing and my head was spinning. I wasn't able to speak. After we had wandered around for maybe an hour, we heard helicopters, saw a bright cone of light, sirens were wailing from all directions. The search for us was in full force and we had to get out of there as soon as possible, before everything was blocked off.

We continued running for what seemed like an eternity. Suddenly, we came across a parked car. A couple was sitting in it, saying goodbye to a third person who lived there in a remote house. We approached the car and asked them if we could get a lift with them to the next town. The two young people in the car agreed to take us with them. We got in. We told them some story to explain why we were out there in the dark. They didn't seem to be suspicious of us, accepting what we said.

When we arrived at the next village, we came up with a plan: I was to hide myself in a dark doorway while the guy with me looked for a telephone box. From there, he was to order a taxi under a false name to come to the address where I was standing. We were wet through from our escape through bushes, over fields, through puddles and mud. After the taxi had been called, we waited together, tense in the dark corner of the doorway. We could be discovered at any moment.

After an eternity, the taxi arrived. We forced ourselves to get in slowly and calmly, muttered something about a breakdown with our car and that we wanted to get to Freiburg. The taxi drove off in the direction of the motorway. There was a police roadblock on the slip road. I tensed up completely. We hadn't thought about that. Every car was stopped, but our taxi was waved through. It was the same in Freiburg: police controls, every car had to stop, only the taxi was allowed to pass. We spent the entire journey worrying that our taxi driver would become suspicious. His car radio constantly blared out the police messages that a manhunt was underway to search for a couple. Our wet clothes began to stink in the warm car. But the driver didn't suspect anything untoward. The fact that we had called from an exact address where he then picked us up had done the trick.

We got out in Freiburg, discussed how to proceed and separated, because we thought we would be less obvious that way, as the police were searching for a couple. Separated, we both managed to get through all of the control points and to reach the train station. It was early in the morning and the rush hour had begun. We bought tickets to Stuttgart. There we changed trains, changed once again in Frankfurt and got on to the train that was to bring us directly back to Hamburg. We remained separated during the entire journey, only exchanging eye contact every now and again to make sure the other one was ok.

At around midday, when we were already on the stretch between Frankfurt and Hamburg, I was sitting in a fully occupied compartment and I felt dead on my feet, but at the same time wide awake. A man sitting at the window seat had placed a small radio on the fold-down table from which music quietly floated into the compartment. The usual programme was suddenly interrupted for a special police bulletin: it reported the shootout that had taken place during the night on the motorway car park, during which two policemen had been injured. I waited for the rest of the bulletin to provide the information we had heard on the car radio during our journey in the taxi: a man and a woman in their mid-twenties are being searched for. It was even worse: the speaker named my full name, described my stature, the length and colour of my hair and what I was wearing.

I ran ice cold and burning hot at the same time. I closed my eyes, expecting everyone in the compartment to stare at me and point their fingers: "That's her." When nothing stirred, I tried to observe the other passengers one by one with my eyes almost completely closed. Had their facial expression changed, or the way they were sitting? Was anybody making moves to leave the compartment? Nothing happened. Everything was as it had been. Nobody reacted to or spoke about the police bulletin. Some of them snoozed away, others continued their conversations, the man with the radio continued to listen to the music. Nobody had noticed that I was the person who fitted the description in every detail. After a while, I calmed down.

The police had found all of my papers on the ground in the car park. With the exception of my driver's license, which I had handed to the policeman before the shots fell, they were all in my purse, which had dropped to the ground. I later found out that the police had been to see my parents, who had given them an exact description of what I had looked like one week before during my last visit to them.

My parents knew hardly anything about the changes that had taken place in my life. Since my initial contact with the Release, I had only told them things that wouldn't cause arguments at home, saying nothing of my new life and ideas. I knew they would be disdainful, reject everything. They identified themselves with the West German state in the form it was supposed to take in the minds of dedicated members of the CDU. My father was unable and unwilling to carry out any kind of discussion with us children in which we disagreed with his views. I wasn't surprised that my parents helped the police immediately in their search for me, but it hurt nevertheless.

I left the compartment. In the toilet, I took off my jacket, stuffed it into my handbag, put my hair up and tied a scarf around my head. Then I went to the end of the train and hoped that as few people looked at me as possible.

In the flat in Hamburg, Irmgard Moeller was waiting on us. She already knew from radio and television that our plan had failed. I told her what had happened and how we managed to get away. "Why did you leave your documents lying in the car? And why did you even have them with you?" The fact that nobody had realised how crazy and irresponsible the combination of weapon and the proper ID card was, was something we didn't talk about. All she said was: "Now they're after for you and you're in it as much as we are."

I found out what that really meant when the *Tagesschau* came on at 8 o'clock that evening. The shootout was one of the headline stories. My face was looking out at me from the TV screen, I heard a description of me once again, and felt as if someone had jumped out of the television and was pointing at me. In one fell swoop I had become a public entity, whose name was also published in the newspapers from the next morning on: "Margrit Schiller, member of the RAF."

I couldn't believe what was happening. I wasn't prepared for something like this flooding over me.

The friends from the RAF brought me to another, larger flat and advised me not to go out for the following few weeks. My height at 6 feet 2, my large eyes and high cheekbones alone meant that I was somebody who would get noticed, even if I changed my appearance. I cut my long hair short, dyed it dark brown and learned how to make myself up.

Here I was, without the slightest idea of what to do. I had only just begun my new life and I was already its prisoner.

The flat was mainly used as a workshop for making false passports. I got to know Manfred Grashof there. He was always friendly and patient, but also withdrawn and distant. He was grieving for his girlfriend Petra who had been killed in June. During a large-scale manhunt for members of the RAF, Petra Schelm had been caught up in a road block on 15 June 1971. When she started shooting in an attempt to escape, she was shot by the police.

I somehow could never bring myself to broach the subject with him. I was supposed to learn how to make false "real" documents. The room already had a large drawing table for making forgeries, and various tools and materials were arranged on it neatly. There was a thick bundle of printing plates with the masters for the official stamps of several city, municipal and regional authorities of West Germany on top of it. There was a tool for removing the photos from passports so that new ones could be punched in using a cobbler's punch press. There was stamping ink in different shades and transparent film on which the respective stamp was first of all printed and then placed on the new, exchanged photo in the document, in the corresponding size. It took a great deal of practice not to ruin a passport or driver's license.

A few days later, a woman from West Berlin came to the flat. In contrast to me, everybody knew her, because she had contact with many of those in Berlin who now belonged to the RAF. She showed a childish curiosity about me, but we didn't get along and had nothing to say to one another. In any case, we were now learning forgery together and practised on reprints that couldn't be used. I had real problems concentrating on what I was doing.

When I couldn't work any longer, I tried to read. But even that was almost impossible. It was really difficult for me to be in the flat all the time, but I didn't dare go out. The manhunt scared me. It was like a huge weight that somebody had laid on my head and shoulders, pushing me down. I desperately needed to talk to someone, but there was nobody there.

People were constantly coming and going in the flat and I was the only one who was stuck there as if walled in. My head became emptier and emptier. I sat there, stared for hours on end at the air in front of me and brooded away the time senselessly and aimlessly. Ulrike snapped at me: "You do absolutely nothing!" and then she was off, before I could even say a word to her. She was there the most, as she also lived in that flat. However, she had shortly before begun a love affair with one of the other women in the flat and they spent the few hours they had together behind a closed door. The other woman sometimes sat down for a moment beside me: "I understand that you feel like shit, we should really take the time to sit down with you and talk about everything. But, you know, I haven't got the time. You can see that there's just too much to do. Ulrike never takes her time. She always wants to do everything all at once, never allowing herself to take a break. And when we have an hour's peace and quiet here, I just want to be with her." I understood what she meant, and nodded wearily with a smile. But, as she was too busy with other things, she wasn't in a position to help me in any way. So sometimes I was just pissed off at the two of them.

Once, Ulrike came in with a few coloured swathes of cloth she had bought. She laid them across the mattresses and then hung them at the windows as curtains: "I'll be spending enough time in ugly, grey cells. This place doesn't have to look like a prison already." She wasn't at all vain about herself and wore any old dark and unattractive clothes that didn't match at all, without even thinking about it.

I felt totally alone and didn't know how I was to get out of that hole without somebody's help. After I had given up waiting for Holger to come up with the idea of turning up at the flat off his own back, I asked for him to come. I hoped he could help me find my feet again. However, the others rejected my request saying that Holger was needed much more urgently somewhere else. Apart from that, they said I should forget about letting my problems be solved by a comrade I had been to bed with. I was outraged, but said nothing. I was really hurt by their response. I didn't want Holger for my bed, I wanted to talk to him. I knew he had some idea about me and my situation. He seemed to me to be the only one I could talk to, to think about what I was going to do now.

However, my desperation wasn't only due to the situation I was currently in, the manhunt and feeling lost in that flat. The shootout in Frankfurt was also getting to me. I hadn't been prepared to shoot myself, but I had had a weapon with me. I hadn't shot, but the shots had fallen because of me and I had been shot at. All of the shots had been horrible, tremendously brutal. The scene went through my head again and again and the memory of the shots paralysed me a little more every time I thought about them. It seemed to me that the comrade had pointed his gun at the police and had emptied the entire magazine until it was empty. In my shock, I hadn't really seen anything. However, I knew that I would never be able to forget these images and the bullets whizzing by.

After almost four weeks Ulrike came with the message: "We are meeting at another flat. You have to come, too, because we want to discuss what to do with you." I went with someone who happened to be in the flat to a nearby shopping centre and bought a dress, a coat, shoes and tights. The meeting Ulrike was talking about was the one on 21 October 1971 that ended with the next shootout and my arrest.

October 23, 1971. When I woke up the next morning after my first night in the prison cell, a small lamp that emanated an unpleasant, cold, bluish light and which was protected by some wire gauze was burning in a niche in the wall. From then on, it burned there every night.

Before I went to sleep, they had taken the blue prison uniform away from me and given me a white shirt for the night which was far too short.

When I was led out for my first walk around the yard, they handcuffed my hands behind my back. They said I was violent and extremely dangerous and that, for that reason, I was put in handcuffs every single time I had to leave my cell. Whenever they opened the cell door, they were always accompanied by a male prison warder. Later, two female warders had to stand in front of the door at all times. For 30 minutes every day, they brought me out into a tiny, triangular yard between the outer wall and the women's block to get some fresh air. It was impossible to walk properly, because no matter which way I went, I ended up directly in front of a wall. Armed guards surrounded the yard and observed every step I took. They were the ones I hated the most. And their hate for me was tangible.

They had locked me up in a cell at the end of a long corridor right next to the administrative wing. The cells next to mine, and those above and below me, were empty. None of the other prisoners was allowed to speak to me or to make contact with me. Before my cell door could be opened, all other prisoners had to disappear from the corridor.

There was an opening about the size of a book in my door with a tightly meshed grill. I was observed through this opening 24 hours a day at irregular intervals: when I was awake or when I was asleep, when I was reading, writing or thinking about things, when I was doing gymnastics or sitting on the toilet, when I was sad, angry or wanted to cry.

I was under tremendous pressure, surrounded by walls, weapons, the gaze of others, controls. I expected an ambush at any minute. I lost my voice, with only a whisper left. Before, I had often stood in the way of myself, felt insecure and indecisive. But now I discovered a great strength within myself that I hadn't known about before. I had to defend myself and I knew I could do it.

I didn't know anything about life in prison, nor about the experiences of other prisoners. In the first few days, I thought that every prisoner was treated the way I was. At that time nobody had had any experience with isolation practices. Up until my arrest, there had only been a few arrests of members of the guerrilla or from other left-wing revolutionary groups. It wasn't until I first talked to the lawyers who were organised by the comrades to represent me that I found out from them how unusual the conditions of my imprisonment were. The judge I was assigned to had ordered "strict solitary confinement; Margrit Schiller's hands must be handcuffed behind her back whenever she is outside of her cell; she must also remain handcuffed during the exercise break; the cell must be illuminated day and night, without break; all fixtures must be removed from the cell; prison clothes instead of private clothing; the prison clothes must be removed at night." These kinds of strict conditions had always existed for prisoners who rebelled; however, the application of them in such a systematic way, from the first day on and then on a long-term basis, was a special treatment that was used especially on members of the guerrilla.

My lawyers did everything they could within the bounds of the law, but faced rejection from all levels of jurisdiction, right up to the Federal Court of Justice.[8] They pressed charges against the judge who had ordered solitary confinement, writing in their grounds for such charges: "There is no justification whatsoever for this measure. The only explanation for this is that the person Margrit Schiller is to be systematically and deliberately tortured, deprived of her freedom and degraded, her punishment a public example designed to deter others and with the aim of wearing down the prisoner before she testifies." Furthermore, the circumstances surrounding my arrest were "an appalling follow-up act to the so-called press conference, to which the Hamburg Chief Superintendent arranged for the arrested Margrit Schiller to be led in violently, like an animal. The direction that has been pursued here must be recognised clearly for what it is. It cannot be tolerated that judges and officers sworn in on the basis of the constitutional state and the constitution are today guilty of perpetrating acts of brutality and violence that blatantly disregard all of the laws set down by our Basic Law, and which, up until now, were only conceivable in connection with the activities of the former Gestapo and openly fascist regimes."

From the minute I was arrested, I was treated as an enemy of the state, despite the fact that the Office of the Federal Prosecutor correctly stated that I was only "on the margins of the Baader-Meinhof Group". However, the social-democratic Hamburg Judiciary went to a great amount of expense and effort for this role on the sidelines. After my arrest, the constant security patrols in the prison were reinforced by ten men and twenty guard dogs and the outer walls of the Holstenglacis prison were so floodlit by searchlights that it was as light as day. The legal authorities justified such measures by saying that they had to prevent my being freed by the use of force.

The directives issued by the custodial judge also meant that, after visits by my lawyers, I had to strip naked in the presence of two female prison warders and then subject myself to a body search. During these, I became tense all over. Making me undress was supposed to rob me of my dignity and force me into submission.

I concentrated on making a suit of armour out of my face, my skin, a suit of armour that deflected all of their gazes. I remained externally cold and rigid, while internally, I was gathering all of my strength for self-defence. It was also new for the female warders in Hamburg to have to body search a prisoner on a daily basis. Some of them were ashamed and tried to avoid looking at me. I had to put up with this indignity for several weeks, until the District Court overruled this decision.

I had already received my first post a few days after my arrest. Many of the letters came from people whom I didn't know at all. The choking incident in front of the cameras on the day after I was arrested had triggered off a fierce public debate about how far the police could go and about violations of human dignity and the constitutional rule of law. In many letters, people gave testimony to their outrage and their solidarity. Individuals, lawyers and groups pressed charges. The Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry of Justice of North-Rhine Westphalia[9] at that time, Ulrich Klug, called the whole thing a "brutal act of police violence" and was applauded by many. One man who worked at Hamburg harbour accused the Chief Superintendent of using "Gestapo methods" and, because of this, was fined for libel several months later. I also received letters in which people expressed their respect for those who had begun the armed struggle.

My name had become known overnight. *Stern*[10] printed a story over several pages with photos my parents had given them.

The other women prisoners observed me from their cell windows, curious and friendly, whenever I was in the yard on my own. When they were out on exercise, laughing and chatting together, I watched them from my cell. Despite the fact that it was forbidden to make contact with me, more than one of them called out a greeting to me or showed me the victory sign with their second and middle fingers. In the evenings, when everybody was locked in their cells, the women talked with one another from window to window. They also called out to me, asked me how I was doing, where I came from and whether I would be freed soon. I didn't have my own radio, but there was a loud speaker in every cell, so we could hear whatever radio programme the prison director had chosen. When they played good music, I plugged in the earphones, turned the volume up full and danced, as much as the cable would allow me. The music permeated my very being, gave me energy, pushed the walls out a little. Every song reminded me of people, moments, feelings. Rod Stewart's voice reminded me that Ulrike always turned up the amplifier whenever one of his songs came on the radio. Later on she was annoyed that she had liked his music so much.

Life in a prison cell felt somehow familiar to me. What I had experienced more than anything during my childhood and when I was a teenager was being alone. That had only changed in the past years at the university and in Heidelberg. In prison, strangely enough, I initially felt less alone than I had done when I lived at home. However, this turned out to be an illusion, as I didn't yet know anything about complete isolation, the prison within the prison.

I had already refused to make any statement whatsoever on the night I was arrested. The detention order showed that the judiciary hoped to wear me down by being hard. After several days in my cell, the daily routine was interrupted.

I had already had my time in the yard, when a warder came to fetch me and led me into the empty cell next door. Two officers from the Federal Criminal Police Force (BKA) were sitting there: "We would like to talk to you in peace and quiet. From one human being to another. You know that an arrest warrant has been issued against you for murder and attempted murder and in connection with the shootout in Freiburg, but things don't have to stay that way. Maybe you can help us clear up how all that could come about. However, we don't want an intelligent young woman like yourself to have to live under these conditions for any longer. Please sit down! So, tell us who you were with at the Bremgarten motorway car park." I listened to them, standing all the time, then I said quietly that I didn't have anything to say to them, not one single thing and then walked past the warder who was waiting at the door and back into my cell.

About a week later, when I was just on my way back to my cell from the yard, the men from the BKA tried again. They talked at me in front of the entire team of prison warders who had been gathered together. I became furious and screamed that they should finally leave me in peace and that I would throw the first object I could find at their heads if they turned up there again.

They left me in peace after that. However, the judiciary tried to find other means to deal with me. One morning, at the beginning of December 1971, I had just exchanged my night shirt for a prison overall, when they suddenly said: "Pack only what you really need. You're being transferred. We'll send your other things on." When I asked where I was going to, there was no answer. Transferred? Why? My lawyers hadn't said a word about it. As usual, I was handcuffed. Several warders led me to an unmarked car that was accompanied by a convoy of vehicles with a marked car at the head and tail of it. They raced through the city with blue lights flashing and sirens blaring, ignoring red lights, and drove towards the grounds of a sports complex where a helicopter was waiting with its rotors already started. I stood in the middle of this enormous police presence, all with their weapons pointed at me, and didn't know whether to laugh or cry. The police, all of them in plain clothes, were nervous and hectic. They were scared there would be an attempt to free me. The massive police presence when prisoners from the guerrilla were transferred was meant to demonstrate that possible attempts to free prisoners would be met with violent measures. But they were also a vast display of power.

The helicopter flew some way towards the motorway and landed on a green piece of land in the middle of a motorway intersection. Several unmarked police vehicles were waiting there. The convoy drove for hours towards the south. The occupants of the individual vehicles maintained radio contact with one another and there were control points along the route. I tried to absorb everything I could from the countryside whizzing past, from the cars and the people. I suspected that I wouldn't be able to see any countryside and only very few people for quite a long time.

The places we stopped at, for example to go for a pee, had been specified beforehand. Everywhere we went, marked cars were waiting on us. When the policemen got out, they took their machine guns with them, which otherwise lay on the floor while driving.

After one of the breaks, there was suddenly a loud bang during the journey. The two policemen to the right and left of me and the one in the passenger seat up front picked up their machine guns, ducked, and pushed me down between the two rows of seats. The driver swerved and pulled up on the side of the road with screeching tyres. Two of the policemen jumped out of the car with their guns ready to shoot and threw themselves into the ditches at the side of the road. The next car in the convoy braked and the policemen in them jumped out, also with their machine guns ready to shoot. Then one of them shouted: "The tyre! Look at the tyre!" It took a moment or two until everybody realised what had happened and they then began to laugh, relieved. One of the car's back tyres had burst, which had sounded like a shot. I had to remain sitting in the car, while they changed the tyre, then the journey continued.

Late in the afternoon, we reached a large, old prison building: Aichach near Augsburg. It was a bleak old ruined monastery that had been converted into a prison. A fitting change, I thought bitterly. I had to hand over my own clothes, which had been given to me for the journey, and was given a dark blue prison dress with a white collar and a white apron which far too small. I refused to wear it. All of the other prisoners had been locked away at the time of my arrival. The female warders I encountered on my way to my new cell either looked away as if I had the evil eye or stared at me as if I was a real monster that they would rather not come up against on the outside.

On the following morning, a fat, disgusting guy, the prison director, came into my cell. He said he didn't know why they had brought me there. He also didn't know how long I was to stay there. However, as long as I was there, he said, I had to strictly follow his instructions, and "I hope you are away from here soon." With that, he disappeared.

The cell was a dark hole. Everything was fixed to the walls and nothing could be moved. I was freezing, as the only heating came from a pipe that came out of the ceiling, going straight down and then disappearing into the floor. In the mornings and in the evenings, hot water or whatever else flowed through the pipe. The rest of the time it remained cold, because most of the prisoners worked outside of their cells during the day.

In the course of the morning, they brought me to another cell where two plainclothesmen wanted to talk to me. Once again I told them that I didn't have anything to say to them. But I wanted to know what I was doing here in Aichach. They didn't answer. The conversation was over.

After two or three days, one of my lawyers came at last and told me the reason for moving me. I was to appear in an identity parade for the policeman who had wanted to check my papers at the Bremgarten motorway car park and who had been injured by several shots. For weeks now, the public prosecutor's office had been trying to carry out this line-up without my lawyer being present. That was why the custodial judge in Hamburg had not said anything beforehand about my transfer. However, as planned, the meeting would be a farce. The policeman had already said on record that I was the same woman whose ID card had been found in the Volkswagen. And, as I later found out from the investigation files, it was planned to carry out the identity parade in a way that was very different to that prescribed in the code of criminal procedure. No other women of my stature and height were to stand next to me – I was to be presented to the policeman alone.

Even before I knew this, I had already decided that I would not voluntarily take part in any of the measures set up by the judiciary. I expected neither justice nor fairness. My intention was to create clearly defined fronts. Each day in prison confirmed what the friends from the RAF had said in the first conversations in Heidelberg: The state fights against revolutionaries with everything at its disposal, including illegal means. Apart from that, I naturally had no interest whatsoever in actually being recognised by the policeman when face to face with him. My papers and my fingerprints in the car were evidence that I had used the car. But that didn't mean I had to be the woman who had given the policeman her ID card.

After a good week or so, I was told to pack again, and this time they brought me to the men's prison in Freiburg. They put me in the last cell in a row of empty cells at the end of a corridor. A policewoman was positioned outside the locked door. It was strange and threatening to be the only woman in a men's prison. I could hear the men's voices and their shouts all around.

On the following morning, they brought me to a room in the administrative block of the prison, where there were only two chairs and a table. All day long, they tried all sorts of tricks to arrange a "chance meeting" with the injured policeman. They fetched me out of the cell under all sorts of pretexts. They led me up and down staircases and along corridors to the toilet; they lied to me that my lawyer had come. When it became clear to me what they were aiming at, I simply refused to leave the room again, even when they wanted to bring me before the judge. He then came to me and was very reasonable. "Without the presence of your lawyer, you do not have to take part in any questioning or an identity parade organised by the public prosecutor's office."

When my lawyer finally turned up, they also had to bring him to me. And when he lodged a formal complaint against the form the identity parade was to take, they had to admit defeat.

Then Gunter Textor appeared in my cell, the head of the RAF Special Commission of the Stuttgart State Office of Criminal Investigation. This man, who only came up to my shoulders, pranced in front of me, almost exploding with fury and screamed: "You are not yet in power! You are not yet in a position to do anything you want!"

Then they brought me to Freiburg Railway Station. I had to think back to my first encounter with this elongated building three months before. I had escaped then. It was true that they now had me in their grip, but that didn't mean that the struggle had ceased.

The special commission occupied a compartment. I sat in the middle of the officers, without handcuffs, so that nobody noticed who was travelling with them. Warders were standing in the corridor and they repeatedly tried to start up a conversation with me, or at least to provoke me to some kind of reaction. They asked me which prison was worse – Hamburg, Freiburg or Aichach? That was at least a question I could answer, but I remained silent.

In Hamburg, the police cleared the section of the station that our train arrived in. A police car drove right up on to the platform to pick me up, and once again, as on the journey away from Hamburg, we drove through the streets in a convoy with blue lights flashing, through red lights into the Holstenglacis prison. It was well into the evening and, when the police car drove into the prison yard of the men's prison under floodlights, hundreds of prisoners roared and banged on their windows to greet me, making a huge racket.

I was totally exhausted from the transports, the massive surveillance, the prison transfers and the efforts I had had to make to avoid falling into the police traps. I had gathered up all the strength I had and I had survived every situation the way I had planned. Back in Hamburg, where I knew my way around, I broke down in response to something ridiculous:

I asked for a cup of coffee, which I only liked with milk. But there wasn't any milk. During my two-week journey from one prison to another, I had drunk whatever happened to be there. Typical watery prison coffee that looked and tasted like dishwater. Or instant coffee without milk. Or water. And now, because I didn't have any milk, I burst into tears. After I had pulled myself together somewhat, I was shocked at my breakdown and ashamed.

Learning in prison and the May Offensive

Alone in my cell, I thought a lot about my family, my childhood and my time as a teenager.

The main reasons that moved me to go from the Release to the SPK and then to the RAF had to do with the way I felt about life at that time, had to do with what I had experienced within my family, at school and in society. I had never been able to find my real self in any of those places. Life didn't make sense to me. Everywhere I looked, I saw lies, constriction, violence and I didn't want to just accept this.

I had been searching for an identity which had a sense of political and personal morality and this search had led me to the RAF.

Now I sat, locked up in a cell, and over and over again, I stood face to face with these two situations: the shootout at the Bremgarten car park and the shootout in Hamburg. It was like a nightmare that wouldn't leave me alone. I jumped every time I heard a bang and, whenever I heard police sirens on the other side of the prison walls, I was overcome with fear and a sense of paralysis. Holger Meins had asked me: "Why didn't you shoot?" Yes, why not? Was I incapable of doing so, or would I have been able to if the situation had been different? I found that the use of violence was justified, so why hadn't I used violence myself? Was I incapable of taking part in the armed struggle? The actual situation when it happened had completely steamrolled me. And even my memories of it flooded over me again and again, and I was unable to put any distance between myself and what had happened. The thought that the shootout in Bremgarten had been unnecessary, and even brutal, and that I didn't even want to shoot, was something I could not admit to myself. I also couldn't admit to myself that I had been the wrong person to accompany Ulrike Meinhof on that evening.

I decided to use my time in prison for learning. However, some time passed before the custodial judge allowed me to order any books and so Heinemann, the Director of the women's section of the Hamburg prison, offered to bring me books she had at home or from the prison library. She asked me what sort of books I wanted. Heinemann didn't fit in at all with my image of a prison director. She was friendly, informed me about the judicial procedures and tried to put into practice the ideas of prison as an opportunity for resocialisation.

I asked her for books about the Nazi period as I wanted to know more about this time. Until my release from prison in February 1973, the history of Germany in the twentieth century remained a central theme in my studies, from the Weimar Republic until the Nazi era right up to the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany and what came after. First of all, I read everything I could get my hands on about Hitler's fascism: academic books from the USA and the USSR, biographies of reactionaries, Social Democrats, communists, as well as novels.

When I was at school, our history lessons had stopped at the First World War and my parents remained silent whenever we children asked questions about the Nazi times and the Second World War. I had always had the feeling that significant things had happened in their lives at that time, but it was something we weren't allowed to talk about. The only thing we heard again and again was: "We couldn't do anything about what Hitler did" and "We didn't know what was going on."

My mother was 21 at the end of the War, my father 32. They hadn't been members in any National Socialist party organisation, but they had identified with the Nazi ideology. With the military liberation from fascism on 8 May 1945, their world fell apart, both their material situation as well as everything they believed in.

It was my father's dream as a young man to study music, but his father had forbidden him from doing so because he did not regard being a musician as a decent profession. So he began studying to be a teacher, which he abandoned during the War and, after being disappointed in love, he volunteered to go to the Front. The Battle of Stalingrad and the victory of the Soviet troops caused a decisive rupture in his life. His self-confidence and his world view were shattered for ever. When he became a professional soldier in the newly created West German Bundeswehr[11] in 1957, he was able to pick up where he had left off in 1945 and where everything had fallen apart for him. He carried out his work at the Cologne headquarters of the Military Counter-Intelligence Service (MAD) in the Bundeswehr and in the field without passion. He drowned his memories in alcohol.

My mother was the first to apply for visiting rights. However, I didn't want to see her. She wrote me letters, but I didn't answer. My parents had assisted the police in their manhunt for me and had talked about me in the press. That confirmed my opinion of them and reinforced my contempt for them. The world they lived in was now further away than ever before, there was no understanding between us. It hurt me and I had to cry when I read my mother's letters, full of distress, threats and emotional blackmail. But I didn't see any bridge towards them and I was envious of others who had parents who understood and supported them. My mother's love for me was such that she would have followed me over the entire globe to find me so that she could lock me up at home. My father would never have looked for me, but would also have locked me up at home.

I also received letters from friends in Bonn whom I had known at school or during my studies, and from my ex-boyfriend and his wife. Other political prisoners wrote to me, too. The first one was Werner Hoppe, who was incarcerated on the other side of the prison in the men's block. He had been in the car with Petra Schelm that had run into a police road block on 15 June 1971. Petra had been shot dead and he had been arrested. Werner wrote to me as if we had always known one another, even though I had never met him. He wrote me very emotional letters, called me his "sister, friend, comrade", sent me a thousand hugs in his thoughts and gave me the first pieces of advice to help me come to terms with my new situation as a prisoner in isolation. He said I should do sport regularly so that I would stay fit, both physically and mentally. I started this immediately and, in all the years I spent in jail, I didn't miss one day. He wrote down poems by Bertolt Brecht, wrote about communism in the Weimar Republic, about Erich Muehsam or Max Hoelz. He recommended books and even sent me two or three, until this was forbidden. He also read a lot about fascism and the Weimar Republic and so we were able to exchange our thoughts and questions in our letters. The closeness and the warmth he managed to create between us helped me a great deal and I felt that our questions and our thoughts were often very similar. One comrade on the outside who wrote to both of us told me later: "I was always fascinated when I received letters from both of you, separately and independent of one another, and came across almost identical thoughts and feelings in them. It's something I also experienced with other prisoners from the RAF."

The men's block where Werner was also housed the sick bay, where the women had to be taken when they needed a doctor. One day I wanted to go to the doctor and extensive preparations were made because, in order to get there, I had to go through the men's block. As other prisoners weren't allowed to see me, all of the prisoners whose cells were in the corridors I had to go through were locked up before I started off. On the way to the doctor, I had gone through almost the entire building accompanied by several prison warders and minders, when, around a corner ahead, there came a similar group with a prisoner in handcuffs. Until this moment, I had never seen Werner who, at that time, was the only other RAF prisoner apart from me at the Hamburg prison. However, we recognised one another immediately, flung ourselves at each other and managed to hug before the surprised warders reached us, tearing us apart.

In its attempt to plan and carry out every step perfectly, the inflated security apparatus had tied itself in knots and had made possible exactly what it had been aiming to avoid: an encounter between two enemies of the state. I drew a great deal of strength from this meeting, which I fed off for months afterwards and it reduced the effect many of the indignities had on me.

It was a feeling of gratification at the failure of the prison and security apparatus and the feeling that I had met another human being in the desert.

I organised my life in prison. My daily schedule was as follows: at least one hour of gymnastics, then after breakfast I studied difficult texts: classics from the workers' movement such as Marx, Engels, Lenin, Lukács, Rosa Luxemburg or new theorists from France, Italy, Germany, the USA and reports from the Third World. At midday I listened to an hour's news and reports on the radio. In the early afternoon letter-writing. After that reading newspapers. In-between times autobiographies and novels. At 7 in the evening another hour of news on the radio and, after that, maybe a feature story about countries of the Third World.

I was allowed a visit for half an hour every 14 days.

Some of the female warders made no secret of their dislike for me. Others just kept a certain distance, or were even friendly. One of them came to see me in my cell – in secret, as the warders were not allowed to be alone with me in my cell – and she bombarded me with questions. She wanted to know what we were fighting for, what we wanted to change, what my family was like and why I refused to see them. She brought me fruit and other treats. As she often spent some time with me, her visits did not go undiscovered and, shortly after that, she was transferred to another prison. She gave me her watch as a going-away present. Another warder sometimes opened my door for a second, slipping a note to me asking me if there was anything she could bring me. As she never spoke to me, she was never found out.

A new era began for me, one of a very special kind of interaction with other people. I had never experienced it in this way before: I not only corresponded by letter with other prisoners, but a great deal of post also came from different towns in West Germany, from people who were members of political groups I hadn't known about until then. They told me about their work, they sent me their political pamphlets and newspapers and wanted to know what I thought of them. From my cell, I took part in their discussions, my thoughts and ideas were listened to, were of significance. People I had never seen before visited me and we got on well from the word go. I wrote letters to Stefan from Hamburg on a weekly basis, and he visited me regularly. He was in the Proletarian Front, and was an apprentice who was active in a trade union. Despite all of this, he still found time for reading and writing. He was searching for something different and the armed struggle seemed like a feasible option, which is why he wrote to me. Christiane from Frankfurt was active in the women's group of Revolutionary Struggle. She was studying to become a teacher, was involved in squatting activities and worked in a grass roots group in the district she lived in. As she lived in Frankfurt, she couldn't visit me very often, but we wrote to one another every month. She was disgusted at the way I had been dragged before the press after my arrest and about the terms and conditions of my imprisonment, which is why she had written her first letter to me. She had her own doubts about whether the armed struggle made sense.

Christiane, Stefan and I had a special relationship to one another, because we felt we were on the same side fighting against the same enemy: against the state machinery, against imperialism. And the situation in which we got to know one another made for a special intensity in our relationship. Every letter was checked by the judge and a copy was made for the public prosecutor's office. The visits took place in a cell in the middle of the women's prison which had been emptied out completely except for a table and four chairs. We had to sit at opposite ends of the table with a female warder and somebody from the Office for State Security seated right behind us, who listened to everything we said, keeping notes all the time. This situation required a great deal of concentration, to be able to keep my thoughts together and not let them be torn apart.

On 2 March 1972, I was lying on my bed listening to the hourly news on the radio as usual, when the newsreader said: "During a police check today in Augsburg, the 23-year old Thomas Weisbecker was shot and killed, and the woman accompanying him, Carmen Roll, 24 years of age, was arrested."

The news took my breath away. I had met Tommy once when he was in the flat in Hamburg where we forged the passports, shortly before I was arrested. I clenched my fists and cried. The third death of one of us in such a short time: Petra Schelm, Georg von Rauch and now Tommy. And I couldn't do a thing. I was locked up in this hole, enraged, but also full of fear. The same could have happened to me. When Georg was shot, I was freezing in Aichach; the news of his death came to me from the news broadcasts on the prison loud speakers, but at that time I hadn't actually realised what had happened, because I was completely tensed up, waiting to be attacked at any moment. Now, I had to think about him, too.

I knew Carmen from the SPK and she had also been in Hamburg before my arrest. She was the only one who had made some attempts at that time to approach me in my loneliness and helplessness and to show me that she understood what I was going through. Now she was in Aichach. I could well imagine how she felt in that medieval, cloistral burial vault and I wrote to her immediately. They had to give her a general anaesthetic in her cell to take fingerprints and had nearly killed her in doing so. Her lawyers and her family protested against this horrendous act of giving a resisting prisoner a general anaesthetic to make the forensic work of the police easier, under conditions that did not guarantee any kind of emergency care. However, as nobody had had to look at such a scene on television, the public reaction was minimal.

My brother Dieter visited me two or three times. He didn't know what to do with his life. He was studying Business Economics, but that was a really dry subject and he wasn't happy with it. He looked to me to give him some kind of direction, his big sister who had often also acted as a mother substitute for him. He wanted to know what the terms and conditions of imprisonment were and how I was getting on. He wanted to know what I thought and why I had taken the steps that had led me to prison.

We tried to remember how we had first lived when we were kids in a temporary, run-down housing estate outside of Oberursel near Frankfurt. My parents had been uprooted by the War. My mother's family had fled from Pomerania and my father neither wanted, nor was he able to live with, his family in Frankfurt following his return from the War. After what he had experienced there, he no longer felt able to become a teacher and took on a job as a gardener with an old relative of my mother's who was a bit of an odd fish. His work was on the outskirts of Oberursel where the barracks were. In this oppressive place of poverty, violence and hopelessness, our parents drummed into us that we were different from the other children in the housing estate, better, and that we should keep our distance from them. Our father was irascible, violent, dissatisfied with life, taciturn and, like all the other fathers in this estate, he didn't know what he had done to deserve nothing better than this in life. At night, our mother worked at home sewing sparkling beads on to fabrics, because what my father earned wasn't enough to keep us. She hated housework, often crawled into bed with books and poetry and let me get on with looking after my siblings and doing the work around the house, even though I was still very young.

Years later, when I went to grammar school, the tables were turned on me: all of a sudden I was the one of those who came from that housing estate for the displaced, who had no good clothes and no money for anything. School became a nightmare for me.

We reminisced about how we moved to Bonn in 1958, living in a new housing estate there. One block of flats (tenements) after another. The neighbours hardly knew each other, the families who lived there seldom got on well with one another. You could hear every radio, every loud word and you knew who was hitting whom, and when. A family with ten children lived in the block behind us in a flat with three tiny rooms. The man was Catholic and his wife was pregnant every year, becoming more and more desperate with every pregnancy. When she became pregnant with the eleventh child, she went out one day and threw herself in front of a train. A short time after her death, her husband remarried a young woman to be mother to his ten children.

I told Dieter about what I had come across while reading autobiographies and novels from and about the Nazi time. During our childhood and when we were teenagers, we often made music. All three of us children learned piano and the recorder and we sang together. I now discovered that many of these songs came directly from the repertoire of Nazi songs or had been used by the Nazis. Realising this was such a shock to me that I never wanted to sing a German song again. All at once, I realised how the Nazis had taken possession of an important part of German culture. They had used Schiller and Goethe just as much as they had the traditional folk songs to celebrate their "blood and soil" ideology.

We spoke about the violence we had experienced and, here, we understood one another. However, I couldn't advise him what to do with his life now. The chasm between his world in Bonn and my world was too great. I didn't hear anything from him for some time, not until my mother wrote to me that my brother was catatonic and she had had to admit him to a psychiatric institution. She said she herself was thinking about committing suicide and that it was all my fault. It took all the strength I had not to let myself be talked into having a guilty conscience by all these pleas and accusations, to stop myself from being caught up in the old patterns of guilt and remorse.

I threw myself into studying and reading. I wanted to know what this new world I was entering was like and in what direction things were going to go. I began to better understand the new dimension of the struggle – internationalism – that my friends from the RAF had had a considerable effect on by deciding in favour of the armed struggle. For the first time, I read books about the war in Vietnam, about the fight against the Shah in Iran, the struggles for freedom in Africa and the guerrillas in Latin America. I discovered the Tupamaros in Uruguay, the FRELIMO and Amilcar Cabral in Africa. I began to see where the great deal of wealth in West Germany, in Europe and the USA came from and what crimes had been committed by imperialism in the world.

When I read about the crimes committed by the American military in Vietnam, a deep hate welled up in me, which was looking for an outlet and an opportunity to turn ideas into practice. When I read how US aeroplanes and US ships left for the war against the people of Vietnam from German soil and German ports, when I discovered in books how German money, German companies together with

North American, French or British companies destroyed the Third World and increasingly plundered the populations there so that the ruling class in Europe and the USA became richer and richer, I became more and more convinced that the armed struggle, even in West Germany, was right and justified.

I felt a strong sympathy and solidarity with the national freedom fighters on all continents. When I read texts by Iranian, African or Latin American guerrilla fighters, it seemed to me that we were speaking the same language. We had the same enemy worldwide: the players and the shareholders in colonialism and imperialism. "You are fighting...in the heart of the beast" Che had said to those fighting in Europe and the USA.

The Wretched of the Earth by Frantz Fanon, a book about the experiences of those involved in the struggle for freedom in Algeria against French colonial power, and the foreword to it written by Jean-Paul Sartre, reinforced my conviction that I was fighting on the right side for the right cause, by the necessary means. I didn't want objective, aloof theories. I passionately took the side of the poor and downtrodden who were fighting for their rights.

And as there were so few of us in Germany, in Europe, and the crimes were so immense, the only legitimate means was counter violence. To want to fight against the violence of governments, armies and large corporations peacefully seemed naïve, blind and senseless to me. The violence in the Third World was becoming fine-tuned due to technological progress and was being institutionalised. The hunger there was the other side of our disgusting wealth here. The presumptuousness and arrogance were endlessly violent. The weapons, the commands and often the soldiers for the wars that were fought on the continents where there was so much misery came from the metropoles.

In the fifties, a movement had started to end the history of colonialism: liberation movements and national struggles in the

Third World organised these and fought for their independence from the old European colonial powers or the USA.

In the seventies, this led to a change in the international balance of power. European and North American imperialism could no longer simply do what they wanted in the Third World – the largest part of the world. There were liberated territories and liberation movements. We couldn't imagine how quickly and how absolutely the national independence movement would come up against its limitations at that time, but we were aware that no region in the Third World could gain and maintain its liberation, if the economic and military power in the metropoles of Europe and the USA remained unshaken. We, and not only we, were convinced that it was possible to shake up these metropoles and mess with their ability to function. Was there not an historical opportunity here for worldwide revolution?

When and where was it made legitimate to use violence? Many on the Left said it was justified for the liberation movements in the Third World to take up the armed struggle, but not in Europe, where the rule of democracy existed. But what kind of a democracy was it that only functioned internally and didn't apply to the outside world? Were the people in the Third World a class of human beings with less value? Is violence always legitimate and only legitimate when perpetrated by the state?

These questions occupied me and I sought through them to find another morality for myself and to find another path in life. One thing was clear to me: anyone who gets involved gets his hands dirty and has to accept responsibility, no matter what comes. Given the choice between looking on and getting involved, there was no doubt in my mind that I would decide against looking on and for getting involved. Despite any mistakes that might be made.

I wanted to do my bit to make sure that those responsible for so much suffering in the world were unable to sleep soundly while their weapons killed people in other parts of the globe.

And then the RAF's May Offensive began. On 11 May 1972, three bombs exploded in the headquarters of the 5th US Army Corps in Frankfurt killing one officer. On 12 May 1972, bombs exploded in the police headquarters of Augsburg and Munich. On 15 May 1972, a bomb exploded under the car of Federal Judge Wolfgang Buddenberg who was responsible for the implementation of isolation practices for political prisoners. The bomb injured his wife who was in the car at the time. On 19 May, blasts were detonated in the Hamburg office block of the Springer publishing house. A bomb warning issued beforehand had been ignored and several employees were injured. On 24 May, in Heidelberg, bombs exploded in the US Army's European headquarters where three soldiers died.

There was no end to it. I had difficulty following it all and in thinking through what was happening. Had I envisioned these kinds of actions when I had decided, while reading in my cell, that the armed struggle was right? Would I myself have taken part in organising them? Four US soldiers had been killed in the attacks on the US military bases in Heidelberg and Frankfurt. The war against Vietnam was being fought from out of these bases, the military aeroplanes and soldiers flew from here and, from here, they controlled the missions for bomb attacks, arrests, torture, the arbitrary murder of the elderly, of women, children and the Vietcong. I found any means to stop all this justified. However, I couldn't rejoice in what had happened, because I had the feeling that I was incapable of using violence myself.

The West German government reacted with the greatest manhunt in the history of the Federal Republic, which brought the entire traffic in the country to a standstill for one whole day. The US government sent in "specialists" in the fight against insurgency. At the end of May, there was a bomb threat, supposedly from the RAF, which said that several bombs would go off on 2 June in the busy city centre of Stuttgart, so that the people of that city could experience at first hand what the people in Hanoi had to put up with during US bombardments. I thought: the RAF would never do anything like that. In my flat in Heidelberg, the friends had debated that activities had to be directed towards those responsible and that, whereas this could affect those who protected them, it should never be directed at the population at large. Why should something like this suddenly occur? All my senses switched to alarm mode. The RAF issued a statement immediately that they had nothing to do with these threats: "These false statements, in their content, their intention, their spirit and the way they have been issued, are more likely come from the pigs themselves." However, this statement was never made public.

In the middle of my thoughts on all of this, Andreas Baader, Holger Meins and Jan-Karl Raspe were arrested on 1 June, Gudrun Ensslin on 7 June, Ulrike Meinhof and Gerhard Mueller on 15 June, Brigitte Mohnhaupt and Bernhard Braun on 20 June and, on 8 July, Irmgard Moeller and Klaus Juenschke.

With this wave of arrests, all of the founding members of the RAF had been rounded up. Was everything now at an end? Were there other comrades in the RAF whom I didn't know and who would continue the struggle?

Immediately after being arrested, Ulrike was sent to the Toter Trakt (Dead Wing) in Cologne-Ossendorf, where Astrid Proll had been up to now. This was a vacated, whitewashed medical wing separated from the other prison buildings. Ulrike saw no other prisoners there, heard nobody apart from the prison warders. Acoustic isolation. Sensory deprivation. White torture. She described later in a letter: "The feeling...that your head is exploding...The feeling, your cell is moving...You do not know whether you are shivering from fever or from the cold – you just freeze.

Speaking at a normal volume requires the effort you usually need to speak loudly, almost the same effort required to shout – you can no longer identify the meaning of words, can only guess at them...headaches...When writing: two lines – by the end of the second line, you cannot remember the beginning of the first – the feeling of internal burn-out." And in another letter, "...in the absolute, absolutely perceivable silence, the entire force of resistance does not [have] any object, other than oneself. As you cannot fight the silence, you can only fight what is happening with yourself, to yourself, that is, you end up only fighting yourself. That is the aim of the Dead Wing: to achieve the self-destruction of the prisoners."

Drawing on the few pieces of information published by the lawyers about the Dead Wing in the first weeks, I tried vainly to imagine the situation Ulrike was in. My isolation in Hamburg was different. I wasn't allowed to be together with the other prisoners, but I could hear them, I could see them, I took part in their lives indirectly. In the evenings, I had long conversations with them from window to window, sometimes one of them even managed to swing something over to me on a piece of string: a page out of a newspaper, a cigarette, something sweet. In this way, I found out why one woman screamed, cried and ranted for hours in her cell. After looking at the evidence for 3 hours, the court had sentenced her to ten years. After years of desperation and indignity, she had stabbed her husband, who had beaten up her and her children every time he got drunk. The children were put in a home. The counsel assigned by the court, whom she saw for the first time at her trial, did not file one single motion at trial.

This was not an isolated case. There were three women in the small women's prison in Hamburg who had a similar history and who had also been sentenced to ten years by the Hamburg judge. I passed on the address of my lawyer to one of the women via one of the warders who was willing to do favours like that, so that he could at least help her at appeal and maybe even gain a retrial. Kurt

Groenewald was a dedicated lawyer who often visited me during my entire time in prison, helping me at difficult moments.

In September 1972, a Palestinian commando unit "Black September" attacked the Israeli team's accommodation at the Olympic Games in Munich killing two sportsmen and taking nine Israelis hostage. The commando unit demanded the Release of 200 Arab prisoners incarcerated in Israel. When the police attempted to free the hostages at the Fuerstenfeldbrueck airport, this resulted in a bloodbath. Nine Israelis, five members of the commando unit and a policeman were killed. A worldwide audience was able to see everything live on television. I didn't have a TV, but I followed the whole thing on the radio. I was shocked at the severity of the confrontation and I didn't understand the reason for it. This event induced me to learn more about the emergence of Israel and the expulsion of the Palestinians from their own country. The brutality used here by the state of Israel outraged me and my sympathies lay with the Palestinian struggle for liberation.

On 20 October, another Palestinian commando unit kidnapped a Lufthansa aeroplane and demanded the release of the three surviving members of the commando unit that carried out the hostage-taking in Munich. This ended without bloodshed when the three Palestinians were flown out of the country.

The first trial

The beginning of my trial was coming closer.

The custodial judge was replaced by a criminal judge and there were several changes to the terms and conditions of imprisonment. People who had been refused previously were now allowed to visit, even friends from the former SPK. We were really happy to see one another again and had to laugh over and over during the visit, despite the fact that the situation wasn't funny at all: this small cell in the middle of the prison and state security officers who followed every gesture and listened to every word, no matter how insignificant. I remember that, on one occasion, two friends were able to come at the same time. We had a ball, and it almost felt like we were on the outside.

My isolation was relaxed a little within the prison: initially I was allowed to watch television with other prisoners for two hours once a week, during which I had to sit on the outside with a warder next to me. Later on, I was also allowed to spend my half hour in the yard, my so-called "free period", with the others. From out of my window, I had often seen a young Turkish woman who always walked alone and found out during my evening conversations from window to window that she had been charged with murder. She had stabbed her husband. As she had only come to Germany a short time before, she couldn't speak a word of German. From her face, you could see that she cried a lot, and yet she emanated a sense of pride that I noticed immediately. I approached her once during our time in the yard, we liked each other right away and tried to communicate with one another using our fingers, hands and our eyes. I began to teach her a little German and we were allowed to continue the lessons for one hour a day in an empty cell. This turned out to be quite complicated, because Fatima couldn't write. However, as time went by, she learned to speak and write German. I learned Turkish and I ordered a German-Turkish dictionary.

I also began preparing for the trial. My second defence lawyer was Armin Golzem, whom I had become acquainted with in Frankfurt in 1970 with my boyfriend of that time. He had a good reputation as a sharp-tongued criminal defence lawyer in political trials, always ready to discover inconsistencies in the evidence and to go on the attack.

I was given access to my files, altogether five or six thick volumes that I began to study page by page. I wanted to know what the Office of the Federal Public Prosecutor knew. And I looked for discrepancies and errors to point these out to the lawyers. We spoke together about what applications would be filed and what strategy we wanted to follow at trial.

At the beginning of 1972, the Public Prosecutor's Office had already rescinded the arrest warrant for murder and attempted murder. However, this seemed insignificant to me, because I thought that they would nevertheless find some way of sentencing me to at least 10 years.

The charge against me was: aiding and abetting a criminal organisation pursuant to paragraph 129, possession of a weapon without a permit, forging documents, aiding and abetting attempted murder due to the shootout at the Bremgarten motorway car park.

To me, one thing was clear – I was not going to make any statements concerning the charges. I assumed that, at the judicial level, the judges and the Public Prosecutors had the power of decision and that they would assert this based on ideological and political criteria. Justice was class justice. In the way I conducted myself at trial, I wanted to show what I thought about this justice: that it did not possess the legitimacy to convict me today with its Nazi traditions and practices. No judge from the Nazi times was ever convicted, many of them remained in office and paragraph 129, which was being used to press charges against me, originated from pre-Hitler times.

I prepared a declaration to read out at the trial and, when I was finished, I wanted to know what other prisoners from the RAF thought about it, so I sent it to them via my lawyer. Andreas' reaction was: "The declaration is shit, completely apolitical." Gudrun said: "Leave her alone, it's what she's like." Horst Mahler suggested a few changes. I didn't hear from the others.

The trial began on 15 November 1972. Not at the court directly next to the prison, but in Hamburg-Wandsbek. The state security forces considered that to be safer and had extended the court building especially for the trial. They took me there on the morning of the trial with a tremendous police presence. I was tense and nervous as I entered the court room, which was full of reporters and others, most of whom I didn't know. Many greeted me with their fists raised in salute and with demonstrations of sympathy. The room full of people was a real shock to me after so much time alone, but it also gave me strength. While the lawyers and the court, a jury court with three professional judges and lay judges, engaged in a legal skirmish with one another concerning the relocation of the trial to Wandsbek and the access restrictions for visitors to the trial, I took a look at the spectators. Several of them gave me furtive signs of solidarity; some had brought flowers. Then I read my first declaration at trial:

"Four months ago, my brother Werner Hoppe was sentenced to ten years of isolation and forced labour. After 33 'days on trial', violence was declared law. This 'explosive conviction', as it was called in the liberal press, made particularly clear that the abstract constitutional state and a court that is the loyal subject of the state are two different things. Judge Schmidt's nightmare formed the basis for his decision. What is significant here is that these 'explosives' are being planted in every court room every day so inconspicuously that, when they go off, it looks like an occupational accident. He who puts his hand into the machinery is always to blame. Guilty is he who cannot react differently to the violence that destroys him daily, who cannot react other than to direct this violence towards himself, to pass it on subconsciously and sporadically or to fight back. On at least four occasions this year, Judge Schmidt alone caused such an explosion in the prison where I have been incarcerated for 13 months, an explosion that erased ten years of a human being's life...

"My solidarity, the solidarity of the revolutionary intellectuals with those who are exploited, oppressed, their lives rendered unlovable, comes from the awareness that life in our society is only possible at the cost of the ill, the oppressed and the exploited; that every one of us is a part of the violence and oppression and there is no way out for us. Everyone in our society embodies the conflict that he either has to be an instrument of authority or be controlled and oppressed himself. This means, he has to decide! The only weapon against the violence of those in authority is the violence and the solidarity of the oppressed!

"If you reject violence, if you really hate it – and I hate violence! – then that means nothing more than doing everything to get rid of this hated violence. The violence that prevails is the violence of inhumanity and oppression, violence against it is violence against inhumanity and oppression, that is, humane and liberating violence. We have to fight against and overcome our acquired, paralysing fear of using violence ourselves, because it paralyses only us, without affecting capital or its protectors..."

From then on, we went back and forth three times a week, me in a "Gruene Minna" (Black Maria), a marked car in front of and behind us and unmarked cars, through road blocks and red lights.

The court building was closed off by a group of about a hundred police; every visitor to the trial had to show ID.

After thirteen months in isolation, every day at trial was an enormous physical and emotional strain on me, although I did nothing but sit there for hours saying nothing. The presence of so many people, their noises and their smells, having to concentrate on the words of others – I just wasn't used to it any more, and it took all the strength I had. If I was brought back to my cell in the afternoons or in the evenings, I fell on to my bed shaking from exhaustion, unable to do anything whatsoever. I didn't even manage to read the newspaper any more.

The days of the trial went by with witness statements and experts being questioned. The evidence was read out, the lawyers filed applications and the courts made decisions. One woman appeared as a witness whom I had never seen before. She explained how she had ended up in the RAF, how she had lived there and why she had then eventually gone back to her family. She was about as old as I was and her story reminded me of my own: nobody had forced her to do anything when she joined the Berlin comrades from the RAF. How could she live with herself, now that she had returned to the arms of her family and become a state witness? That somebody no longer wanted to or no longer could continue was possible, but betrayal? To testify against your own friends to save your own skin? That was something for which I could only feel contempt.

I never said one word about "the thing", but I issued several statements, above all about the conditions in the Hamburg prisons, the situation of the political prisoners and the hype surrounding the trial. There were often skirmishes in the spectators' area and the court had the visitors to the trial locked out.

On 17 January 1973, the prisoners from the RAF began their first hunger strike against the isolation practices that all of the approximately sixty political prisoners were subject to. When I heard about the start of the hunger strike, I was unsure. Nobody had informed me about it beforehand and I had never thought about going on hunger strike myself. Should I join in, despite the ongoing trial? Was a hunger strike dangerous? Could you become sick because of it, or die? Were you allowed to take liquids? In my cell, I had lots of food from my weekly purchases. What should I do with them? Push them under the bed? Put them outside the cell?

When I told my warder that I was going to take part in the hunger strike, the prison doctor turned up after a few minutes. She told me that a hunger strike was very dangerous, that I would almost certainly be excluded from the trial, and, if I insisted on going on hunger strike, I should at least drink lots of tea with sugar. Nothing she told me was true, but I didn't realise that until later. And I would more likely have ruined my health if I had followed her advice and taken sugar.

The prison directorate refused to take the box of food out of my cell, so I put it under my bed. I already suffered from dizziness after one day and had even worse problems concentrating than before. I felt hungry and the box was under my bed. I ate a little. After three days battling with myself back and forth, I gave up.

At the trial, I read out a declaration of solidarity with the hunger strike with the demand to "end the isolation" and "remove Ulrike from the Dead Wing". Then I wanted to have myself excluded from the trial and no longer take part in it. But the court didn't exclude me. So I began talking loudly and being a nuisance until the order was given to forcibly remove me from the court room. Here, the visitors in the court room expressed their solidarity with me and the whole thing ended in a brawl.

On 5 February 1973, sentence was passed: two years and three months, with imprisonment suspended until the conviction came into force. I was no longer attending the trial, and was sitting in the bath when the warder hammered on the door, saying "You're being released Ms Schiller." That wasn't what I had expected. However, as was often the case in decisive moments, I remained calm and concentrated fully on what was going to happen now. I quickly dried myself, and they then brought me to my cell, where I threw all of my belongings into a plastic sack. Then my lawyers came and accompanied me to a side exit.

Journalists were waiting in front of the prison gates with their TV cameras running or cameras ready. A small group of friends and comrades were also waiting for me, among them the mother of the singer Wolf Biermann. She lived in Hamburg and was friends with my lawyer. We walked in a demonstration with flags flying to a nearby Greek restaurant. One sip of red wine, and I already had a red face and hot cheeks.

I didn't know what I was going to do now.

On 9 February 1973, the day of my release, a three-day solidarity hunger strike began among lawyers and family members of the RAF prisoners who had already gone on hunger strike themselves. A protest was carried out on the busy street in front of the building of the Federal Court of Justice, which had made the decisions concerning the terms and conditions of imprisonment in most cases. This strike was one of the first public actions by friends and relations against the isolation torture.

I decided to join in. The next day, I went by train to Heidelberg with my lawyer Kurt Groenewold and one of his colleagues. There, we were picked up from the station by two other lawyers and then drove in their car to Karlsruhe. It was already evening, and we talked about the prisoners' situation, about my experiences and about those of the lawyers. They told me how the prisoners they knew personally were getting on. All of a sudden, in the middle of our conversation, I was dead tired. Why did I have to fall asleep now, when there were so many new things to hear, to smell and to see? With all the strength I could muster, I fought against this inexplicable tiredness, until I managed to get over it. I looked at my clock and saw it was exactly 10pm. For one and a half years, the light had gone out at exactly this time of night for me and this conditioning had followed me into my life outside prison. Prison wasn't finished with me yet.

In Karlsruhe, I met the first family members who were supporting their siblings and children in prison: Wienke, the sister of Ulrike Meinhof, Christiane, the sister of Gudrun Ensslin, Nina, the mother of Andreas Baader. I also met Gabi there again and other friends from the former SPK who had visited me in prison. We talked with some very young people there who had started to become interested in the prisoners' situation and the guerrilla struggle and who listened wide-eyed to an "old one" like me when I had something to tell them. They lived nearby the Federal Court of Justice and let the hunger strikers sleep at their place.

During the day, we stood on the street in front of the court with banners. The lawyers had adorned their black robes and passers-by started up conversations with us. Even when the discussions became heated, I never sensed any aggressive rejection from them. That was to come later.

After the end of this three-day hunger strike, Gabi gave me some money to help me get by during this initial period out of prison. I went to Bonn by train to visit my sick brother whom I hadn't heard from in a long time. I wanted to find out what had happened to him in the last year and to see whether I could help him. I went to his flat first, but his flatmate told me that he went to group therapy in a local hospital during the day.

I found him in the expansive grounds of the university clinic in an open psychiatric unit. He hardly reacted when he saw me; his movements were slow and his face emotionless. He had obviously been given strong sedatives. I asked him if he wanted to see me and he said he did, but that I would have to wait two hours as he had not finished his group therapy. In the late afternoon we travelled to his place by bus, went shopping for food and cooked together. I asked him about his therapy and about the past year. He answered my questions in much more detail and more casually than I had expected.

The next day, we clashed heftily with one another. When I asked him about his long-term girlfriend and their break-up, he began screaming and ranting so much that I thought he was going to flip out completely. Without knowing it, I had touched a very sore point. After that, I couldn't talk to him and I was afraid of unintentionally provoking him. As I didn't want to see anybody else in Bonn, I travelled back to Hamburg, troubled and sad. There, I lived in a small basement flat in my lawyer's house.

Once a week, I had to show up at my local police station in Hamburg in order to fulfil the terms of my probation. If I wanted to travel anywhere, I had to apply for approval beforehand with my probation officer. If he said it was OK to travel, I then had to show up at the local police station in the town I travelled to.

In the weeks following my release, the effects the isolation had had on me became apparent for the first time. After months of being constantly alone, life on the outside put me in a state of being continuously on edge. I was very agitated inwardly and I had problems sleeping. I still had difficulties concentrating, and writing was just not possible. The gastritis that had begun during my term in prison became chronic. When I was arrested, my periods had stopped from one day to the next and stayed that way during my entire imprisonment. One week after being released, my periods started again abruptly. However, my hormones had obviously changed in some way, because I was no longer able take the pill with which I had had no problems before being arrested.

I felt that I had changed without really knowing how. I also noticed that the world outside of prison had also changed in my absence. I had to gather all the strength I had to strike up a relationship again between myself and this changed world.

What was also very difficult for me to deal with, was that I had suddenly become a public figure. My high profile had mainly been "created" by the press and didn't have anything do to with what I had actually done. I was no longer able to just go somewhere, join in and listen. I was now regarded and treated as somebody special. This only served to reinforce the feeling of detachment from my new surroundings that had been created by prison. People recognised me everywhere I went. The housewives with their shopping bags smiled at me in the underground, because they knew my photo from the *BILD* newspaper. People on the street pointed at me or said hello. All of them were friendly, and nobody reacted aggressively towards me.

I travelled to Augsburg to visit Helma who had written to me the first time after I had been forcefully dragged in front of the press in Hamburg and with whom I had corresponded intensely since then. She had also visited me and had sent me birthday and Christmas presents to the prison, declaring herself my adoptive mother. She lived with her husband and son in Augsburg in a small and very modest flat. She had been ill for many years, almost unable to move, and she felt very lonely in this conservative town. Our friendship had given her new courage in life. When she looked at me though the thick lenses of her glasses, with the unasked, worried question in her eyes about what I was going to do now after my release, I could do nothing but hug her lovingly.

I also went to visit my former boyfriend who now lived with his wife in Munster. They had both visited me in prison on several occasions and wanted to help me now. They gave me some money, so that I had time to look around for something.

Every step of the way, no matter where I travelled, I had "company". One time, when I went to Heidelberg, the observation by the Special Commission of Baden-Wurttemberg was massive and threatening. They drove their car behind me right through a pedestrian precinct, demonstratively following me everywhere I went. As I was leaving my flat one night with Gabi, where we had met up with some old friends and members of the former SPK, we immediately looked for the observation car on the street. It was nowhere to be seen. "Come on, let's find out where they are parked," I said to Gabi. At the next street corner, we saw one of the cars that had often followed us tucked into a parking space. We ducked down, crept along the sides of the houses and sneaked up to the parked car. We didn't stand up until we were right next to the car: two crime officers were lying on the front seats, which they had reclined. Terrified, they jumped up, and pressed the door locks down so that we couldn't open the doors from outside and started up the engine, revving it to the full. Gabi and I stood there, completely flabbergasted at their reaction: they had been afraid of us.

In Hamburg, the observation by the Special Commission's task force was far more discreet and I became practised at identifying those who were following and observing me from the crowds of people and the vehicles all around me. I learned fast and noticed that I was developing a sixth sense for it: cars or people who cross your path more than once, eyes that were apparently searching for nothing in particular, movements that circled me or that were drawn towards me.

Being in prison, and especially in isolation, gives rise to a strong need for human warmth and tenderness. In my last weeks in prison, I fell in love with Kay. He visited when I was inside and, after my release, he acted as my bridge between life on the inside and on the outside. Kay was younger than I was and had little political experience. I got to know his circle of friends, all of whom were young and interested in politics, but who couldn't be bothered with the hierarchical, rigidly structured left-wing ML groups that had emerged.

My arrest and imprisonment had given me the opportunity to go through and quickly catch up with the political steps that I had missed. I could see myself joining one of the political groups that I had occupied myself with while in my cell.

In April 1973, there was a meeting in Frankfurt of lawyers, left-wing intellectuals, ex-prisoners, relations and visitors of the political prisoners, for whom there was a plan to set up a defence committee. The idea came from Andreas, Gudrun and Ulrike who had also written a paper on it. At the meeting, there were heated debates over the term "political prisoner". Was it a term that divided the prisoners, or did it apply to those who had become criminal out of political conviction? I was against using the term "political prisoner", as it seemed to set them apart from the other prisoners. Later on, I understood that division did not come about by describing differences for what they were. In the days after this meeting in Frankfurt, I was sharply criticised by Andreas: "What were you thinking about, holding up and disorientating the whole meeting just because you haven't got a clue about what's what. Shut your mouth and start learning before you open it again!"

In addition to several smaller groups, there were two larger political organisations then who weren't among the dogmatic new parties: the Proletarian Front (PF) in Hamburg with Karl Heinz Roth and, in Frankfurt, the Revolutionary Struggle (RK) group around Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Joschka Fischer.[12] I had read the newspapers of both groups and had corresponded with Stefan and Christiane who were members of them.

The first time I went to a Proletarian Front meeting in Hamburg they were having a plenary meeting. Karl Heinz Roth opened the meeting by introducing me and asking me to speak, something I hadn't expected. I was taken by surprise and felt out of my depth. I didn't have any experience in public speaking and, as I had come to listen, I turned down his offer.

I often saw Karl Heinz again. We discussed the dockworkers' situation, as the Proletarian Front carried out a lot of political work among them. In prison I had also corresponded with a dockworker who had written to me after I was arrested. It was important to me to talk with Karl Heinz, because he knew a great deal and he wanted to know more about me. He worked as a doctor and wrote political books and his capacity to work was enormous. He was an intellectual who wanted to put his ideas into practice.

A few weeks after my release, a message that had passed through many hands was brought to me that someone from the

RAF wanted to see me. Somebody was to help me shake off my followers to make absolutely sure I wasn't being tailed. The message confused me. I somehow thought that the RAF had ceased to exist after the 1972 arrests. Who was left and what could they want from me now? I hadn't reckoned with being requested to attend a meeting. However, I didn't hesitate in saying yes. No matter who they were or what they wanted from me, they were my comrades.

I got together with Kay and we mulled over the map of the city and came up with a plan. We set off several hours before the specified time. We drove around aimlessly for some time with a car we had borrowed from a friend, in order to find out what cars were observing us and then shake them off. I put on make-up and, at a place where their view of us was unclear, I suddenly got out and, pulling on a coat and a headscarf, ran through a gap in the fence to get on to the city train whose arrival we had checked beforehand on the timetable. From the city train, I changed to the underground and on to buses, all according to a well-organised schedule. I couldn't hang around anywhere and I had to move fast changing from one train to another or to a bus.

At the agreed meeting point in a small town near Hamburg, I sat down at a table in a chosen pizzeria. Ten minutes later, a tall, thin, black-haired man with a moustache and sunglasses came and sat down next to me. The French newspaper *Le Monde* was the agreed sign. He smiled briefly and took off the glasses. I didn't know him. He wanted to know what prison had been like for me, what I knew about the other prisoners and what I thought about the political situation on the outside. He said I would maybe also get to know people who were interested in joining the RAF and, if so, I should set up contact between them. He also asked me if I wanted to meet with him now and again. He was obviously tired and nervous. He often looked over at the other tables and outside the window to see whether we were being observed. After about an hour, we went our separate ways.

In Hamburg, a colourful mix of young people squatted in a vacant house in Eckhofstrasse, and Kay's friends were also among them. The squatters wanted to turn it into a youth centre, but the police cleared it out fast and brutally. The hefty reaction by the police and the Hamburg Senate led to the radicalisation of many of the young people involved and some of them later became part of the RAF.

After I had become acquainted with the Proletarian Front in Hamburg, I also wanted to take a look at the Revolutionary Struggle group in Frankfurt. When I arrived there, Daniel Cohn-Bendit invited me to stay at his place. I accepted his offer and stayed there for a few days. He lived together with Joschka Fischer and others in a large apartment in an old building. I breakfasted with them and, in the evenings, we went from pub to pub. It was difficult to talk about anything in a concentrated fashion with Cohn-Bendit, because he put on a little show for everyone who came by and said hello to him. He didn't completely reject the armed struggle in West Germany, but he was more interested in discussing the when and how. Joschka Fischer was absolutely against it. Cohn-Bendit's girlfriend was more interested in talking to me about his macho behaviour and her never-ending battle against it. She felt that he didn't take her seriously, that he carried out the important discussions with men, and that she was there to go to bed with him and to look after him, even though she was also active in the group.

I got to know several people in Revolutionary Struggle: those in the Opel company group[13] and in the women's group, one of whom had written to me in prison, and I took part in the discussions on squatting. The question was whether militant means should be used to defend the squats and what confrontations with the police the squatters should provoke. Shortly before, there had been street fights over a squat and very different opinions about what to do were making their rounds in the evening plenary meetings: should they hold back, defer from squatting any new houses, use passive defence, or go on the offensive and defend the houses militantly and continue finding new houses to squat. How would the city council and the police react?

It was a time of major conflicts, struggles among the groups on the Left over which direction to take as well as struggles for power within the Left. Questions over the way forward and with whom to join forces? Was there any hope of success in fighting for the squats? Should those on the Left go into the factories to the "real" proletariat? Was there a future for revolutionary organisation among the dockworkers in Hamburg? How significant was the women's struggle for our own organisation?

What I often experienced when I got together with people on the Left was reflected in a small scene that I will never forget. In Frankfurt, a woman from Revolutionary Struggle whom I had never met before came into the flat one day. There was a poster on the wall with my photo on it. When the woman suddenly came upon me in her flat, in the flesh, she was completely distraught. In reality, she didn't actually want to be that close up to the "politics" with which she adorned her walls. I quickly forgot the conversation we had.

Members of the left-wing groups often treated me like an exotic being. Without my having noticed, the mythologisation of the RAF had already begun. I was the "revolutionary" before my time, someone who had had "real" experiences, because I was one of the first political prisoners. But only a few of them were really interested in what someone like me had to say. Many of them were afraid and took a step back, distancing themselves from the guerrilla.

I now also became aware of the fact that the arrests of the founders of the RAF, the denunciations of both those involved and the ideas of the guerrilla as well as the conditions of the isolation torture in prison had left their mark. People were afraid. It had become clear to everybody that revolutionary struggle could have personal consequences that went as far as death.

For many on the Left, the concept of the guerrilla was a closed door, a failed undertaking. With the arrest of its founders, there was nobody left to carry on the fight. Fear was breathing down people's necks. Was the concept of the urban guerrilla a failure, the state too strong to be conquered? The RAF had looked for a confrontation, the consequences of which it couldn't overcome. Was the idea itself therefore false? Or was something wrong with the way it was put into practice?

In the initial years of the guerrilla, many, and not only those on the Left, had felt a great respect and even awe for those who had begun to fight against the state apparatus, those who had dared to take the step from analysis and mere talk towards practice, risking their own lives in the process. I was also treated with this respect and awe; however, in contrast to the situation in 1970 to 1972, almost nobody saw any future for themselves in the guerrilla struggle.

I saw things differently. Despite my time in prison, I wasn't afraid of the consequences. For me, the armed struggle had only just begun and the time since the RAF had been founded was far too short to know whether the concept of the urban guerrilla in the metropoles of the capitalist world really did have a chance or not. It was clear to me that I lacked political experience and that the armed struggle required the highest degree of special skills, knowledge and political awareness in order to achieve success. But who else would carry out a revolutionary struggle in the Federal Republic of Germany? Was it not true that the majority of the workers had become a workers' aristocracy that also profited from the exploitation of the Third World? What interest could they possibly have in the destruction of the imperialist system that guaranteed them a standard of living that was built upon the colonisation of huge continents? Who in Germany cared about the wars, the massacres, the torture and the impoverishment in Asia, Africa, Latin America? Who was responsible for this?

At the beginning of April 1973, Helmut Pohl was released from prison. I wanted to meet him. When I phoned his mother in Frankfurt, she said, "It's good that you called, he really wants to see you." I took the next train to Frankfurt. Helmut was waiting for me on the platform and it was a very intense encounter. Both of us had prison behind us, and none of the friends we had been together with two years ago were free. I stayed in Frankfurt for the following days. He was rediscovering the feeling of freedom again and we spoke about ourselves, our feelings, our plans. He was clear about the fact that he wanted to get back to the guerrilla as soon as possible. He also said that those in prison had to be freed, they were determined and he wanted to continue the struggle with them.

Some time after that, I met up again with the comrade from the RAF. Once again, I had carefully prepared the journey there using my city map, other maps and timetables. This time, a friend of Kay's took me some of the way by motorbike so that I could shake off those who were constantly following me.

I reported on my travels, about Helmut and about the people I had met. The comrade was more open this time and more relaxed. He told me that the RAF was now a small group for whom life had become very difficult following the arrests in 1972. They no longer had the political and practical experience that the founding members had and the Left were afraid of having anything to do with the RAF since then. He asked me whether I also thought that the prisoners had to be freed. For the new members, it was clear that, without Andreas, Gudrun, Ulrike, Holger and Jan, they would never be able to develop the necessary strength they needed for the struggle in West Germany. Maybe I knew that Andreas had said they should be careful in their dealings with me at first. Nevertheless, they still wanted to know whether I wanted to help them. It wasn't about my becoming a member of the RAF or a guerrilla fighter, but they wanted to know if I would build up the infrastructure so that those in prison could move about after being freed. I agreed to do this.

I hardly saw Helmut any more. I assumed that he also met with the comrades from the RAF and was preparing to go underground. I found out later that this was the case.

When I met the comrade from the RAF the third and fourth time, he said: "The action to free the prisoners will be underway soon. We assume that, in the aftermath of it, many people will be arrested as a preventive measure or out of revenge. You will almost certainly be among them. In any case, none of those known to the pigs will be able to move freely for a while. We need to get a hold of flats and everybody at risk will have to go underground before we start. Do you want to?"

I had no idea about what kind of action they were planning and I didn't feel as if I had the right to ask. That was the business of those living illegally, of whom I wasn't to be a part - nor did I want to be. For reasons of safety and in principle ("Every one of us should only know about what they themselves are directly involved in"), I wasn't to be informed about it. However, I did want the prisoners out of jail.

I had never thought that I would have to make the decision to "go underground" so quickly. I had wanted to take more time for myself, to gain more political experience, to make some progress for myself, and now I was to suddenly make a move. But why not? In the three and a half months since I had been released, I hadn't found a group I wanted to join. Everywhere I went, it was different than I had imagined it to be while in prison. I saw myself faced with the decision of either supporting the other prisoners after they had been freed or of possibly being sent back to prison myself.

Reorganisation of the RAF

Four months after my release from prison at the beginning of June 1973 I returned to life underground. I managed to shake off the followers who were constantly at my heels by working out an exact plan of the public transport I would use, and when and where I could change over without any waiting time in-between. Although it was pretty easy that time to shake them off, I checked for several hours afterwards to make sure that my "silent companions" were gone for good. Then I took the train to Berlin and went to a 'conspirative' flat.[14] A woman who was to help me was waiting there. She cut and bleached my hair, took a photo of me and used this to make a false passport that was already waiting for me. This was always something that caused problems because of my height. Equipped with my new documents, I headed for Holland where I was to meet some people.

At the flat in Rotterdam I met Helmut Pohl and two others. They were waiting for news from the Palestinians and they told me that they had worked out plans with some people from the Al-Fatah headquarters in Lebanon to get the prisoners free by hijacking an aeroplane. An Israeli plane was to be hijacked in Amsterdam by a group under Palestinian command which included members of the RAF.

At this time, it was clear to the radical elements within the Palestinian groups that they needed the support of the radical Left in Europe, because the decisive material support that made Israel's existence possible came from Europe and the USA. Since the sixties, the Middle East had become an increasingly important factor for the West because of its oil wells. For us, Israel was first and foremost the imperialistic bastion of the oil-dependent industrial nations. Ulrike once told us how, before 1967, she had actively supported Israel, and the kibbutz movement in particular. The memory of Auschwitz also meant that she too demanded material support for Israel, something that the West German governments after 1945 only paid unwillingly and slowly. However, during the Six-Day War in 1967, when the Springer press, more than any other newspapers, made fun of the fleeing Arabs with derisive racism, praising the efficiency of the Israeli Army, many on the Left changed their position towards Israel. The fate of the Palestinian population became significant when, following their expulsion by Israel, they were forced to live in huge camps, without a future, without a country, used merely as a pawn in the strategic interests of others, including the Arab states. In 1970, Palestinian guerrilla groups decided to hijack aeroplanes to draw attention to their plight and to put pressure on Israel with the help of the worldwide community. The hijackings achieved their objectives and, until 1973, nobody had been injured. We saw them as legitimate attacks against the state, which trampled on the fundamental rights of another people.

It wasn't until years later that we realised that this cannot be accepted as a form of action for revolutionaries, because the lives of many people who have nothing to do with the struggle are put at risk right from the very beginning. However, our awareness of this took years to develop.

When I arrived in Rotterdam, the operation had been planned completely and the preparations made. Palestinians had come to Amsterdam to finish off the details and they had brought weapons with them, mainly machine guns. The Israeli aeroplane that landed and took off from Amsterdam according to schedule was to be taken over by a mixed group consisting of two Palestinians and two Germans. All that we were waiting for was the signal to go.

For weeks, we waited for this message from the Palestinians. When nothing came and we didn't want to wait any longer, one of our representatives flew to Lebanon to the Palestinian in charge, Abu Hassan, who let us know that the situation in the Middle East was coming to a head on all levels, meaning that no joint operations could be carried out at the present time. Abu Hassan was the security chief of Yasser Arafat and represented the radical wing within Al-Fatah who were in favour of working together with the RAF. Arafat himself was always against it. In 1973, Israel stepped up its attacks on Lebanon, the main base for refugee camps and for Al-Fatah. This caused intense conflict among the Palestinians about how to proceed in future. We couldn't understand Abu Hassan's reply. There had already been several delays in preparing the operation. We thought that the Palestinians perhaps didn't want to carry out any joint operations with us, but didn't want to say this directly. It was not until October, when the fourth war in the Middle East broke out, the Yom-Kippur War, that we understood what Abu Hassan had meant when he had told us that things were heating up on all fronts.

Later, when I was once again in prison, I read in the newspaper that this Palestinian friend, who had been important to us, had been killed by a commando unit of Mossad, the Israeli secret service.

All or our plans and ideas had been focussed on this hijacking and, when all hope of carrying out the operation disappeared beyond the horizon, we began to have other thoughts. What could we do now? Again and again, it became clear to us that we needed more members. We spoke about the people we knew and who we thought might want to work together with the RAF. One of us travelled to Hamburg, contacted some comrades and organised a flat, and then the others followed. I was the most well-known among those being searched for in West Germany and therefore the one most in danger. For this reason, but also because the others had spoken much more with one another, had been far more involved in planning the hijacking, and were far more determined to put their politics into practice as the RAF using arms. I stayed behind alone in the Rotterdam flat. Maybe the expected signal would still come from Lebanon.

The uncertainty and the waiting were very difficult for me. I had burned all my bridges behind me, so what was I to do now? I had gone back to living illegally to prepare the ground for freeing the imprisoned comrades, to make new contacts, to find flats and to forge papers. These activities no longer existed and, if I really wanted the comrades to be freed, I would have to create the conditions for this to happen and plan and carry out the operation myself. This idea didn't appeal to me, but I saw no other way.

After about two or three weeks, somebody came to the flat and told me that I was to return to West Germany and that they had a new place. I took the weapon I had possessed for some time, but which I had never carried with me when walking around Rotterdam, hid it under a scarf in my handbag and went by train to Hamburg. There, I learned that closer contact had been established with Christa Eckes whom I had met during my trial. She had worked as legal assistant for my lawyer. After being with the Trotskyists for a long time, she had now left them. She was on the lookout for the opportunity to put her politics into practice as she was sick of all the fights about theory. After following my trial, she had become interested in the RAF and the prisoners.

There had also been continued discussions with Kay since I had been away. Both Christa and Kay wanted to join the group. Christa had also brought someone else along, Wolfgang Beer, whom she had known for quite some time. He had also been active with the Trotskyists, leaving them at the same time as Christa. The severe confrontation surrounding the house in Eckhofstrasse had given them the final motivation to come to the RAF.

We were a disorganised crowd with the worst possible prerequisites for achieving anything. None of us had the political experience and knowledge to organise illegal work. We hardly knew each other, had no experience with one another. What united us and pushed us forward was the common will to free the prisoners. We had no doubt whatsoever that we would not be able to achieve very much without the founders of the RAF and that their presence was decisive for the continued existence of the concept of the urban guerrilla. It was clear to us that we would need years to gain the political experience and the knowledge that Andreas, Gudrun, Ulrike, Holger and Jan possessed. And whether we would ever be able to develop the imagination, initiative and drive that they had was doubtful.

We were lacking in everything and we had hardly any political or material support. We had no infrastructure, no logistics, no flats, hardly any weapons, no money, there were problems with ID documents and passports. We tried to tackle everything at once. Two or three of us in Hamburg, two or three in Frankfurt, two or three on the move, stealing cars, forging papers, checking out banks, trying to establish political contacts, organising weapons, reading political statements and papers, carrying out discussions about our mistakes and our prospects.

And we got ourselves into a real tangle with all of this. We gathered all the strength we had in an attempt to apply ourselves and make our ideas reality, to become practical and to do more than just talk. However, it was just too much – the pressure from the state that was looking for us with everything at its disposal, the pressure from the Left who wanted us to stop and the pressure we exerted inwardly on ourselves.

We didn't take any time to get to know each other or to gain more practical experience with one another. We split up immediately. As I was a well-known person in Hamburg, I went to Frankfurt with Kay to try and get a flat, money and weapons there and to establish contact with people who would support us. Helmut, who came from Frankfurt and therefore felt he might be discovered there, stayed in Hamburg with Ilse Stachowiak who was left over from the RAF group that had been arrested in 1972. Christa, who was not on the wanted persons list and who had the most contacts in Hamburg also stayed there. Another one of our group had been arrested during one of his many border crossings before we even got underway. After Wolfgang had joined the group, he also stayed in Hamburg a while, where he was from and where he knew his way around.

Kay and I started looking around in Frankfurt. Helmut and Ilse visited us often or we went to Hamburg.

We visited people I had met during my travels after my release from prison. We also visited some people with whom we had no longer been in contact after the arrests in 1972 and about whom we had been informed by those in prison who sent us secret messages. This was why, one day, we happened to be standing in front of "Pfirsich's" workshop, which was Dirk Hoff's nickname. He was pleased when we told him who we were. "Man, how fucked up was that when they were all arrested! At first, I thought that they would get me, too, and after having heard nothing from you lot for so long, I thought you didn't exist any more. What are you planning now? What do you need?" This was how he greeted us and he called his girlfriend, a North American, small, with short blonde hair, very likeable, so that we could meet her, too. "She's great, we do everything together." The first thing he did was weld some "corkscrews" for us so that we could steal cars. Then he helped us repair and modify our weapons, which he was a master at. And, the whole time, he wanted to talk to us about the mistakes of the past and our prospects for the future. Later on, after I had been arrested and read his statements in the press, I couldn't believe it. He maintained he had been forced at gunpoint by Holger Meins to cooperate with them. And he reinforced all of the clichés that were part of the psychological tools of war: Andreas Baader, the stupid, big-mouthed gang boss who did exactly what he shouldn't have done in his situation; Holger, the ice-cold killer.

Nobody asked why he had continued to work with us after those who had allegedly forced him to work with them had already been in prison for more than a year.

We met friends who had often worked together with Ulrike Meinhof and the other prisoners and who had assumed that everything was over after the wave of arrests. When we turned up, they eyed us suspiciously, because they thought that the police had discovered them and were trying to set a trap. Once we got talking, they realised they could trust us and so helped us find flats or make contact with others who supported us. Of the other matters we discussed, the stories about the founding phase of the RAF were of particular interest to Kay and me.

One day, I travelled to Karlsruhe to look for the people I had met during the hunger strike the lawyers had organised in front of the Federal Court of Justice in February. I couldn't remember their full names or their exact addresses, only the area in which they had lived. I walked around the town for hours trying to find their flats and hoping perhaps to bump into them. At some point I met someone who told me they had moved away. Long after my second arrest, they joined the RAF.

We also went to a group which was organising solidarity for the IRA at that time. The struggle in Ireland and in the Basque country had flared up again in the sixties using guerrilla methods. With the comrades there, we talked about the political contradictions within the IRA and wanted to know whether they were interested in cooperating with us. They were not against the armed struggle, but neither were they in favour of the RAF.

We went to intellectuals and writers, to Heinrich Böll's son and to his Indian wife or to Karin Struck. We didn't know them personally, but from statements they had made, we realised that they sympathised with us. We wanted to get to know them and see whether they would work with us. They were friendly towards us, but rejected any kind of cooperation.

When Helmut and Ilse came to Frankfurt, we didn't get on very well. They were of the opinion that Kay and I worked badly, that we didn't come up with any results, and that we didn't have the right attitude in dealing with people. Kay and I thought that they weren't doing any better than we were. We distanced ourselves from one another and became competitive. We felt at a disadvantage, because there were only two of us and we had to work in a city that was largely unknown to us, while the Hamburg group had four members, two of whom were very familiar with the city.

Through various channels, we carried out discussions with Andreas Baader and the other prisoners. We lacked technical knowhow and asked their advice about forging passports and stealing cars, for example. We sought the advice of those in prison about our plans to free them; however, what they suggested was way beyond our capabilities and possibilities.

We discussed again and again how we could free those in prison. Perhaps we could kidnap somebody important? But who? A businessperson or a politician? A German or an American? We never got beyond these questions.

After we had been forced to forget our plan with the Palestinians and the hijacking, Andreas worked out an exact plan to free him. However, to carry it through, we would have needed a completely different structure and other logistics, neither of which we were able to set up. Instead of destroying his plan, because we would never have been able to put it into action, either then or at a later date, we kept hold of it, like so many other things. When we were arrested in February 1974, the plan was found by the police and the Federal Prosecutor's Office made the most of it, using it to prove there had always been plans to free the prisoners.

It was used to justify the continuation of the inhumane conditions of imprisonment at Stammheim. With this mistake, we had handed over to State Security exactly what they had been looking for. Andreas was severely critical of us, because we didn't come up with any ideas, any plans or any actions. He was right. But we couldn't change this, and neither could he.

Eventually, Andreas convinced his lawyer Eberhard Becker to join us. Eberhard was dissatisfied with his work as a lawyer and both of them were of the opinion that Eberhard would decisively improve our situation and our options. Of course, this wasn't the case. Rather, we now had a new guy in the "group" whom we hardly knew and, what is more, he was full of Andreas' ideas about the direction we should go in. These didn't bear any real relation to our group process or to our search for an orientation. The competitive fights and conflicts among us got worse and almost led to the complete destruction of the group.

In order to solve our money problems, we decided to organise a bank robbery, a legitimate means as far as we were concerned to use money that had been stolen from the people for our cause. Ulrike had once written on this: "Some people say that bank robbery is not political. However, since when is the financing of a political organisation not a political question? The urban guerrillas in Latin America call bank robbery an "act of expropriation". Nobody maintains that bank robbery in itself will change anything in the exploitation regime. For the revolutionary organisation, it is first and foremost a means for solving the problem of financing. It is logistically correct, because the problem of financing cannot be solved in any other way. It is politically correct, because it is an act of expropriation. It is tactically correct, because it is a proletarian act. It is strategically correct, because it serves to finance the guerrilla."

We had to find a suitable bank and then steal the getaway cars beforehand. We stole cars using the same method I had learned before going to prison, but we also tried out other methods. Once, we observed the owner of a large, white Mercedes over a long period of time, and found out that he always drove along a stretch of road that wasn't clearly visible at the same time every day on his way home. We overtook him, stopped his car pretending to want something from him, and asked if he would get out, saying we needed his help. Then we jumped into his car and drove away. One of us followed in a second car, listening to the police radio, just to make sure. We had rented a garage beforehand, and we now parked the Mercedes there so that we could change its appearance without being disturbed.

Now, more than 25 years later, I can no longer remember the details of the bank robbery. I had buried these deep at the back of my consciousness so that I could no longer put anyone at risk. Now, when the possibility of endangering anyone no longer exists, I simply can't recall those memories.

The only thing I see before me is the following scene: we all jump out of the bank into the Volkswagen bus that is waiting for us with its motor running. The driver revs up the engine and drives round the next corner so fast that, for a moment, the van is balanced on two wheels and we threaten to tip over. While we are all changing into the clothes we had already prepared, I notice a deep cut in Christa's thigh. She is completely calm and, in the blink of an eye, she tears off a strip of cloth from somewhere, ties it tightly around her thigh and then continues to change into new clothes like the rest of us, as if nothing had happened. Because of this deep cut, Christa is the only one of us who is later convicted for the bank robbery, with the injury being used as circumstantial evidence. After changing clothes, we go our separate ways and I get on a bus with one other person from our group. We are carrying the money from the bank robbery in a plastic bag, as if we had just come from shopping at the supermarket.

In Frankfurt, we met on several occasions with Wilfried "Bony" Boese and Brigitte Kuehlmann. They were in the middle of organising their own illegal structure and setting up the Revolutionary Cells (RZ). They had political and organisational ideas that differed from those of the RAF. They thought it was important that all members of the RZ stay legal for as long as possible and remain in their usual circumstances and continue to go to work. You could already tell, from the clothes they wore, that they were on a different kind of Left. We thought that whole scene was impossible, unserious. We thought they were only playing with the idea of revolution, without any real interest in actually doing something practical about it. We were convinced that their concept offered the Office for the Protection of the Constitution too much scope to infiltrate them.

We discussed carrying out coordinated actions with the RZ because of the military putsch in Chile in September 1973. We from the RAF wanted to attack undercover weapons transports that were on their way to Chile via the Hamburg and Bremerhaven ports. We eventually had to give up these plans, as an operation like this would have required us to concentrate all our energies on it and thus would have moved us even further away from our goal of freeing the prisoners. So it was, in November 1973, that the RZ carried out its first operation against American ITT subsidiaries in West Germany because of their support for the military coup against the Chilean government. Brigitte and "Bony" also helped us to get hold of weapons. Almost three years later, both of them died in Entebbe where an Israeli military unit attacked an Air France plane that had been hijacked by a Palestinian commando unit of which "Bony" and Brigitte were a part. The hijackers demanded the Release of 53 prisoners in different countries, including the six from West Germany. All members of the commando unit died at the airport in Entebbe. Afterwards, when the newspapers reported that the passengers had been separated into Jews and non-Jews, I couldn't believe it. It seemed like a usual press lie to me. It wasn't until later that I began to think about the difficult tightrope walk between Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism.

We did not have any contact with the 2 June Movement, a conglomerate of various militant groups in Berlin that had joined forces at the beginning of 1972. We never travelled to Berlin ourselves, but we knew that there had been fierce arguments between Andreas and Gudrun and the members of the 2 June Movement about the criteria by which political operations were determined which ended with their going their separate ways. The RAF described the 2 June Movement as populist, saying that they "only looked for people's applause". The RAF wanted to carry out strategic operations that hit at the centres of power, and against the USA in particular, which "acted as if it was in a colony" in West Germany.

Two of us travelled to Italy to meet up with comrades from the Red Brigades. I travelled with someone else to France to speak with the members of an armed organisation from Portugal who had asked to meet us, because they needed some help in falsifying documents. We spoke French with one another, which I could speak quite well. Nevertheless, it was difficult to understand one another, because the French that the two comrades from Portugal spoke sounded pretty Portuguese and their way of expressing themselves was also strange to us. Their language consisted of a mixture of Maoist-Marxist vocabulary that we didn't use in that way. And we knew even less about what they told us: they mainly organised themselves within the Portuguese colonial army. Both comrades had already taken part in war in Africa, although they were still young, about the same age as we were, only just over twenty. They said that that was where the force to overthrow the Portuguese Salazar Regime came from. They were working together with African liberation movements in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau. "We mainly carry out acts of sabotage. Many of the comrades from our organisation have been tortured and killed. But the fight isn't going to last much longer, the fascist colonial regime is about to fall." Carrying out political work within an army was something we couldn't even begin to imagine. Armies were always part of the other side. US soldiers had found help among the German Left to desert during the Vietnam War, but what we now heard from these Portuguese sounded alien to us.

We had met on the street and then went to a park for a walk. The two of them nervously watched the area around us at all times. I handed over the documents on forgery after I had explained the basics of our methods. Translating everything wasn't a problem; they said they had already organised that. "Do you need weapons?" they asked. One of their most important tasks, they told us, was to provide the African liberation movements with weapons they stole from the Portuguese army stocks. They could get something for us if we wanted.

We arranged to meet against some weeks later, but nothing came of this meeting.

In autumn 1973, some guy in Hamburg who had rented a flat for us had denounced us. The Hamburg Office for the Protection of the Constitution decided not to arrest the first person who entered the flat, but to carry out a long-term observation of it, in order to uncover all of those living in illegality and then to catch them all together in one big operation. The noose was tightening all the time.

One time Kay and I were going around Cologne in the car. I was driving. All of a sudden, I saw a car behind us in the rear mirror with two guys in it who made my blood run cold when I looked at them. I knew they were pigs. From that time on, we began to systematically check whether cars drove past us repeatedly or stayed close to us. After only a short time, it was clear that we were being observed by a large troop of powerful cars. We considered how we could get away. We hadn't been to Cologne that often and didn't know our way around, and the only thing we could think of doing was to drive to the underground garage at the Cathedral.

First of all we tried to lure the observation cars to another area of Cologne. Then we drove as fast as we could straight to the underground garage, parked the car on the intermediate parking deck and ran to the stairway that led right up to the Cathedral Square. While running, we pulled off our coats and I tied a scarf around my hair. As we were hastening across the road, we saw the observation cars sealing off the underground car park. Nobody took any notice of us, because they assumed we were still in the car park.

Even after we had been arrested, we could never understand this attempt to catch us. We later discovered from our case files that it had been a competitive act by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution who had wanted to have the glory of executing a successful "terrorist arrest" themselves. This clashed with the plans of the Hamburg Office for the Protection of the Constitution to arrest us all in one fell swoop after observing us for a longer period of time.

The bank robbery had been successful, but apart from that, little of what we attempted to do worked out properly, and nothing that had to do with our actual goal of freeing Andreas, Ulrike and the others went well. Instead, we began to argue with one another, to mistrust each other the more they observed us, and we failed to draw any conclusions from all this. We didn't give the people who wanted to work with us a chance. We weren't able to turn useful contacts into sustainable relationships. It was awful.

At this time, and also later, I treated others self-righteously, arrogantly and humiliatingly. In my conviction that I had taken the only possible and correct path, I measured up everything and everybody by my own yardstick. One woman whom I had long been in contact with worked in an important American military institution. She looked around and found out what opportunities there were for us to carry out a bomb attack on the computer centre, and then she asked to play an active role in the attack against the centre. I reacted to her request with a blank refusal. I branded her willingness as a complete overestimation of her own capabilities, criticised her into the ground and, on my orders, we broke off all contact with her.

During the winter months, all of us had noticed that we were under observation, but we didn't think it had anything to do with us at first. We simply couldn't imagine and didn't want to admit that the police could have picked up our trail. Later on, when encounters with the trackers and attempts to arrest us happened more often, we began to have an extremely subjective view of the situation, which was often far from the objective happenings. Anybody who saw policemen wanted to back out from the struggle; anybody who felt they were under surveillance had problems identifying with illegality. We hoisted ourselves with our own petards by declaring reality to be a projection created by our own minds.

On the night of 4 February 1974, four of us (Wolfgang and Eberhard were also in Frankfurt) were spending the night in a conspirative flat in the attic floor of a new block of flats. Suddenly, we were woken by noise and bright lights. The flat was surrounded by a huge number of police and the entire building was lit up by very bright floodlights. We could hear a helicopter above us and a voice coming through a loud speaker ordering us to give ourselves up and to come out of the flat, without weapons, undressed and with our hands in the air. At the same time, the door to the flat burst open with a loud bang and, through the windows, we could see heavily armed police on the roof.

At exactly the same time, Christa, Ilse and Helmut were being arrested in Hamburg. Because of the date of our arrest, we were referred to as the "Group from 4.2" from then on. There was only one thought in my head: it was obvious it had to end this way after the shitty previous six months.

All four of us stepped into the entrance to the flat, naked and with our hands up. The entire stairwell was full of heavily armed police in protective clothing. I was the only woman and, halfway down the stairs, I had to stand there naked, surrounded by young policemen. After the initial tension had eased, the first pigs standing around me began to make remarks about my body. It took about half an hour until the officer-in-charge wrapped a coat around me. I felt absolutely degraded and humiliated.

In the Toter Trakt (Dead Wing)

The next day, my Frankfurt lawyer Armin Golzem came to see me in the Preungesheim prison. I felt shattered, endlessly tired, unable to think and even walking was difficult. Golzem, full of irony about our defeat, had brought the newspapers with him. Our arrest was the top story, of course, and once again my photo and my name had been made public, along with those of Helmut Pohl and Ilse Stachowiak. I learned that, on the night of our arrest, the radio stations had broadcast every hour that the RAF was threatening to attack the football World Cup at the Hamburg stadium on 22 June with SAM-7 missiles, unless all political prisoners were granted amnesty on the first of May.

In my abject state, I was hardly capable of reacting, but it reminded me of the preparations to arrest Holger Meins, Karl-Jan Raspe and Andreas Baader. Who was responsible? This time it was clear, without a doubt, that the Office for State Security had planned and prepared our arrests over a long period of time. I could hear the other prisoners, and when I was taken to the showers or to my lawyer, I could see some of them, but all contact was strictly forbidden and we didn't even try. I fell over and over again to brooding about the past year. I felt humiliated by my own incompetence.

After four weeks in the Preungesheimer prison in Frankfurt, I was flown by helicopter to Luebeck and brought to the wing that housed the sick bay of the women's prison. The sick bay was a flat building at ground level, completely cut off from the rest of the prison with its own walled-in yard outside of the remaining grounds. When I arrived in this wing, all of the sick-bay cells were occupied.

In the days that followed, the warders removed prisoners from the wing every day. When they were finished, only one other prisoner apart from me remained. She was in a cell at the other end of the building, a sick woman resigned to her fate who didn't respond to any of my attempts to make contact with her. I had watched the transfers of the other prisoners carefully. If this woman was also transferred, then I would find myself in a Toter Trakt (Dead Wing). I didn't want to admit to myself that I was already in a Dead Wing. Even when, in the following months, one or two sick prisoners were transferred to the sick bay for a short time, it didn't change my situation one little bit, because I heard nothing of them.

During my period of illegality, at the end of 1973, I had read Ulrike Meinhof's reports from the Dead Wing, also a wing where the sick bay was, in Cologne Ossendorf. This had immediately triggered off a widespread movement against this instrument of torture. The Dead Wing is the core element of a scientifically, cleverly devised form of torture that remains invisible in its use and in its immediate impact. White torture doesn't work with physical violence, doesn't use punches or electric shocks, but uses absolute human isolation, depriving the person subject to it of every form of living communication. Despite the radio, books and maybe even television, a person dies in the very substance of his soul, while his outer mantle remains unscathed.

The reports by Ulrike from the Dead Wing had shaken me to the core. Despite the cruelty of it, the use of this specific form of torture held a certain logic for me: the enemy fights his toughest opponent with his fiercest weapon. Ulrike occupied a position of central significance for the guerrilla and therefore occupied the same position as an enemy of the state. She was a co-founder of the guerrilla and she had become a symbol for it.

But why were the methods of the Dead Wing being applied to me? I had been turned into a public figure by the media; however, I judged myself above all by what I had planned and by what I had either failed to achieve or had done wrongly. I desperately searched for a reason why this torture was being used against me, but couldn't find one. Was I really such a major enemy?

I felt a failure. As I couldn't find a reason, I fantasised that I wasn't really in the Dead Wing. I turned the world on its head and was no longer able to tell the difference between my inner perception and the outer reality. When the last prisoner was finally removed from her cell, I broke down completely.

I was incapable of seeing that the measures used against assumed or real terrorists are never implemented against the individual alone. These measures also serve to deter others, so that the thought of revolution is strangled and a feeling of powerlessness spreads.

The Dead Wing was the result of the image of a "super-dangerous terrorist" built up in the media. In the press, I was labelled the "leader of the Group of 4.2" and now the state apparatus was using one of its hardest instruments to destroy me as the alleged head of the revolution. As I didn't realise that this was their goal, I was unable to defend myself. The Dead Wing had done its work.

During my first time in prison, I had been in solitary, that is, isolated from the other prisoners. However, I saw the other prisoners while they were exercising in the yard, and they could see me. I heard them 24 hours a day, because they lived in the same building as I did, even if the cells next to me, above and below me had been vacated. I heard them laughing, calling, arguing and crying. And, again and again, other prisoners tried to contact me despite being banned from doing so; they talked to me from window to window or tried to slip notes undetected under my door. I was alone and shut out, but I was in a building that lived.

The Dead Wing represents a whole other dimension of isolation. I was alone, with nothing around me but a great emptiness. Alone in a completely isolated building. I saw and heard nothing from the rest of the prison where the other prisoners were housed. There was nothing but the endless silence. No sound, no answers, no laughing, no crying. Only me. In this emptiness, there are no contours any more. Your feeling for your own body disappears, even the feeling of your own existence, and the walls, the iron bedstead, the few objects and your own movements melt into an indefinable sameness.

I was in a bad state. I had to cry every morning after waking, and I didn't know how I was going to get through the day. I had to consciously fight against madness every single day. I made friends with the spiders, and began to study these beings, the only other living things apart from me in the cell, and I learned to tell them apart from their colours, their shapes and their sizes, an exercise designed to stop myself from going crazy. The effort required for this helped me close the hole where the madness would otherwise have seeped in. For hours on end, I observed the sparrows and the blackbirds in the yard, just to catch a sight of something living. When the small sparrows stole food from the larger blackbirds, this was one of my few moments of joy. It took an enormous amount of strength for me to read, and writing was almost impossible. At seven in the evening, I was so exhausted that I fell into a deep, leaden sleep until I was woken the morning after.

The only people I saw and heard were the female warders, when they brought me my food or came to take me out to the yard for my exercise period. In my hunger for human contact, I constantly had to fight against waiting for a friendly gesture from the warders. One day they were friendly, the next day abrasive, something that unsettled me. It took some time before I realised that I would have to very much distance myself from them, to avoid becoming their pawn, which was obviously what they were aiming at. The same female warder came all the time, accompanied by the deputy prison director and a male warder. The two women looked more like peasants, strong, broad in stature and with red cheeks. Their cold, alert eyes observed me closely. The prison director Greif was a skinny little man whom I rarely saw, although I did feel the effects of his sanctions. It was still damned cold at the end of February/ beginning of March 1974. One of the main problems in our cells that every prisoner has to deal with is the cold. You never get warm. I was given prison overalls and a thin, short cardigan. No prison coat for me and no warmer jacket. Greif refused permission for me to have my own coat "for reasons of security".

He and his deputy director ordered the other prisoners to stand with their faces to the wall immediately if I passed one of them when being taken to have my weekly shower. As if I had the evil eye. Or an illness that was so contagious it could be contracted by merely looking at me. The first time we passed a prisoner who was cleaning the floor and she straightened up, becoming as stiff as a piece of wood and turning her face to the wall when she saw us, I felt as if I was choking on the hard lump in my throat.

Every fourteen days was "shopping" day, when the prisoners were able to buy some extra food from a salesman outside. I wasn't allowed to go there myself, of course, but had to give my shopping list to the director, who then brought me some of the things I had ordered on the following day. I always awaited this delivery with burning hunger, immediately stuffing my face with the fruit, biscuits or cheese. After an hour at the most, I had not only guzzled the whole lot, but I had stomach ache, a thick head and my legs felt like they weighed a ton. Nevertheless, at least this interrupted the monotony and emptiness of the days. I could feel myself, even if it hurt, and I could strain myself to digest everything and bring back my ability to think. Because the monotony drains you of energy

I thought I was feeling so bad, because I had done everything wrong in my one year of freedom. It never occurred to me that it was the conditions of my imprisonment that were causing my wretched state. I rummaged about within myself, only looking inwards and then back again, instead of seeing the reality.

Since my first arrest in 1971, the terms and conditions of imprisonment had changed completely for all prisoners from the RAF. Many of those who wanted to visit were turned down by the judiciary, because they were seen as "sympathisers". Many left-wing newspapers, leaflets, and written statements were confiscated because they "endorsed criminal activities". This justification was applied to any resistance, no matter where – whether in Chile against the fascist military, whether in South Africa against the violent racism, whether in Iran against the Terror of the Shah's regime or the fight of the Palestinians for their right to life and against expulsion and occupation by Israel. The censorship laid down by the judge prohibited reading about any of this, because we could then feel encouraged in what we believed by the struggle of these liberation movements.

In one ruling by my Hamburger custodial judge, it said, for example:

"1. The written works and newspapers listed below are not to be passed on to the prisoners and are to be placed with the prisoners' possessions in storage.

Informationsdienst No. 37, 38 and No. 40
Chile News No. 16
MIR, Chile Documentation 1
Informationsdienst No. 42
Documents from the Chile Committee
The listed broadcasts are not to be passed on ...

All of the written works approve of the armed struggle against the existing order and give the impression that it is right and necessary, and that it achieves the goal of changing the existing conditions.

These written works are in a position to endanger order in the prison institution. This also applies when, as here, solitary confinement has been ordered, because it is not possible to prevent the writings getting into the hands of other prisoners by handing *them out of windows, for example. In this way, these prisoners could be encouraged and incited to insurgency, for example.*

The free expression of opinion is not curtailed by this measure. The writings call for breaches of the law to be carried out, at least indirectly, and are therefore no longer covered by the Basic Law (Art. 5 II Basic Law).

(Isbarn)
Judge at the Local Court"

There were often cell raids, during which the entire cell was turned on its head, the defence documents were examined and every kind of personal record was confiscated. They could access everything, even every shred of thought that I put down on paper to try and bring some order in the chaos in my head. Everything that had to do with our lives was observed, registered, classified.

Hunger strike and death

We prisoners from the RAF and those from its political environment were distributed to many different prisons throughout West Germany. In order to resist this separation and the effects of isolation the prisoners created the *Info*, in 1973. This was a correspondence between the prisoners that was passed back and forth via the resistance post. In the *Info*, we discussed strategies for trial, political appraisals and, above all, we wrote about ourselves and our situation in prison.

The *Info* became a symbol of a way in which we could organise ourselves in prison and fight for every single one of us, so that the isolation couldn't separate us from one another or crush us.

In these letters, a political discussion took place between the founders of the RAF, which I found totally fascinating. They discussed the long-term goals and methods of a revolution. To them, it was not about a new, revolutionary party which tackled the question of power, in order to then take over power itself. If the movement were institutionalised, this could only end in the rigidity that was evident in the GDR or the Soviet Union. Even if the RAF repeatedly expressed its position of solidarity towards these countries, it never shared their political ideas. It was impossible to come up with a precise model of a new and just future society, because the road there was so long and it was the experiences that were made during this struggle that first gave rise to new possibilities and ideas. No matter what, the aim was to achieve the collapse of imperialism by the liberation movements in the Third World under the protection of the socialist states, working together with the resistance movements within the metropoles of the USA and Europe, and to paralyse this First World to such an extent that it was no longer capable of functioning. Not until after the downfall of imperialism, would the opportunity for the real liberation for all of humanity come about. Revolution in only one country was something that the RAF considered to be impossible, because the unequal balance of powers would always turn the wheel of history backwards.

In order to provide a foundation for their considerations, they all studied the revolutionary classics by Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, Lukács, and Bakunin, and tried to analyse the experiences of the liberation movements in the Third World over the previous twenty years, discussing the work of new theoreticians like Regis Debray, for example.

In April 1974, the Portuguese colonial regime collapsed. After such a long period of bloodshed, the so-called Carnation Revolution had happened without the shedding of blood. I remembered the two comrades we had met in France and I now understood what they had been telling us. Young military men who had made war in Africa refused to continue this war that had cost the lives of so many Portuguese soldiers. The streets of Portugal became places of celebration where the people danced, cheering for Major Otelo and the other young officers with carnations in their hands. The newspapers I was given in my cell brought news and reports about the developments in Portugal every day.

Hopefully the Yankees wouldn't intervene like the year before in Chile, where they had helped Augusto Pinochet to victory against President Allende who had been voted in by the people. I decided that my future "area of work" in the coming years in prison was going to be the Portuguese colonies in Africa, which were obviously going to become independent some time soon. I wanted to know more about them and I ordered reading material from my lawyer, in book shops, and from the comrades who wrote to me. I asked them to send me whatever they could get their hands on.

However, the longer I was isolated in the Dead Wing, the more I lost the ability to concentrate and to imagine life outside of my cell. The world began to shrink to include only me and my fight for survival in this cell. A chasm opened up between me and the other prisoners from the RAF. I was shut out. I lost my ability to relate to others and became obsessed with myself.

When I received post, the discussions about developments among the Tupamaros in Uruguay or Willy Brandt's resignation no longer interested me and I looked through the letters with shaking hands trying to find out if I was being criticised. If I did not find anything, I sat back down in my chair, relieved. If I found half a sentence somewhere that was critical of me, my heart beat violently and, for hours afterwards, I could read nothing else and think of nothing other than this tiny sentence.

I was completely overreacting, but in the *Info* itself, a harsh tone was the order of the day. Criticism was often use as a cudgel and self-criticism became self-flagellation. The language used was often unbearable, the relations between us were not comradely, but an expression of the brutality of the situation in which we found ourselves.

I don't know any more who this sentence, in a letter dated July 1974, came from: "It is not the aim of the questions to create an Inquisition." From Jan maybe, or from Gudrun. However, this process of criticism and self-criticism was moving towards becoming exactly that, the longer it lasted. The categories we used for ourselves, with which we attacked each other and with which we castigated ourselves demonstrated these Inquisition methods: treachery, collaboration, pig, bastard – words with which we described our own thoughts and feelings, which didn't seem to fit in with our ideas of morality and proper conduct. Using the word treachery instead of mistake questioned the person, condemned his or her motives and efforts completely. When I read these letters today, almost 25 years later, then I think that, in the *Info*, the torture forced its own language upon us – just as it did within the small groups of political prisoners in the wings – and we put the screws on each other.

We wanted to give everything to the struggle, but we also rubbed salt in each other's wounds, causing further agony. We wanted to make ourselves fully "a function of the struggle" and we felt right in what we were doing and duty bound to control and analyse each other in everything we said and did. We wanted a collective process, but the differences that existed in experience, knowledge, initiative and courage also created positions of power; and it was Andreas who made the main decisions and who remained invulnerable. Laughingly, the story was told of how, during one of the first small hunger strikes it had come out that he had eaten a chicken – something that nobody else in the group could have done without being subject to a barrage of scathing criticism of being a "traitor to the hunger strike and the collective". Andreas was constantly searching for practical things to do, even in prison, in isolation. Even under the changed conditions, he managed to study systematically. He gained enormous knowledge on various subjects and he paid attention to everyone in the group. But nobody criticised him and, with that gesture of his "Come on, you must understand that" or his fast judgements, he could hurt people a great deal or render them silent.

Completely alone in the separate wing of the Luebeck prison, I lost myself and I began to live in projections of my own mind, and I was totally afraid of people. I was in a vicious circle. On the one hand I had a tremendous hunger for company and for being close to people, but on the other I had this tremendous fear of them. This is the madness that the isolation was striving to achieve. The perverseness of this method of torture is that it intends to make "its object" unable to communicate by depriving it of living communication. Which is exactly what happened to me.

Holger Meins somehow realised what was going on and wrote me a letter asking what was wrong with me. He tried to help me and wanted me to remember the good times. But I couldn't remember anything good. I was cut off from my own past, stuck in a hole in which before and after no longer seemed to exist. I was like the rabbit staring at the snake, no longer able to move and aware of nothing but the snake.

In May 1973, more than a year before, Ulrike had written about her experiences in the Dead Wing: "The person sitting in [the Dead Wing] is unable, even at the beginning, to tell precisely, specifically, certainly what is going on and deludes even himself about the extent and the progression of his own destruction, especially as the thing annihilates his ability to think coherently and creatively as if hacking at his thoughts with an axe and he is constantly running after the debris."

As I myself didn't know what had become of me in the Dead Wing, I also wasn't able to communicate this to the others. Therefore, nobody felt it was necessary to start a public campaign against the Wing in Luebeck, the way they had against the Wing in Cologne when Astrid Proll, Ulrike Meinhof and Gudrun Ensslin were there, or for Ronald Augustin in Celle. In my desperate attempt to understand this reality and to try and make the others understand me, I described the Wing in all its details and drew it on a piece of paper. The only reaction to this came from Gudrun: "Good, so we've seen that now". I felt terribly abandoned.

When we had been arrested in February, a discussion was already being carried out in the *Info* about the necessity of going on a collective hunger strike in order to have the terms and conditions of imprisonment changed. This discussion continued throughout the summer. The basis for these discussions was the certainty that being in isolation for years would demoralise most of us and destroy the collective. We "talked" about the fact that it would be a long and difficult struggle during which some prisoners might die. It was clear that the state apparatus would regard a long hunger strike by many prisoners as a showdown and that they would not give in easily. Every one of us would have to be clear about the consequences and then reach a decision. Only those who were also prepared to lay their lives down in this struggle should take part. We talked about the experiences that had been made on previous smaller hunger strikes and how we wanted to respond to the upcoming longer strike. What if, for example, one of the prisoners was refused water – would the others then immediately go on thirst strike? The smokers were to try to give up smoking before they started, because cigarettes deprive the body of additional calcium, which is already broken down in the bone tissue after a short period of hunger strike.

On 10 September 1974, the trial against Ulrike Meinhof and others for the freeing of Andreas three years before, began in Berlin. On 13 September Ulrike issued a hunger strike statement in the court room, after which forty prisoners began a collective hunger strike which was sometimes joined by other prisoners and which was to last five months. The main demand was the abolition of the isolation and equal treatment with all other prisoners.

Christa Eckes, who had been arrested at the same time as me and who had been in the main building of the Luebeck women's prison since then, was placed in the cell next door to me because of the strike. We were allowed to exercise in the yard together and had an hour in the yard each day. However, because of the unsuccessful time we had spent together, which weighed down on us and which we were unable to resolve because of the nature of terms and conditions of our imprisonment and under the tense conditions of the hunger strike, something with which neither of us had any experience of at that time, and also because of the state I was in, we really rubbed each other up the wrong way. Christa watched my breakdown with suspicion.

I found it enormously hard to no longer eat. In isolation, food was one of the few things that gave me life. I could touch the food, it was something sensual and it made me able to feel my own existence. I hesitated. I wanted this strike, I was using it to fight desperately for my own survival, we had no other option, but I was also afraid of it. When we started the strike, we had to get rid of the last items of food from our 'shopping trip'. I kept my jam on a shelf in the corner as a secret something I could fall back on. Christa discovered it, got really angry and told everybody about it in the *Info*. She wrote that it was a sign of my dishonesty and that I didn't want to fight. I was so ashamed I wished the earth would open up and swallow me. The first days without food were hard. My stomach demanded food, the hunger made everything else pale to insignificance, my head wanted to think of nothing but eating, and the dreadful Luebeck prison food suddenly smelled appetising when they brought it to our cell doors. It was impossible to read or write anything. The hours dragged on endlessly. After three or four days, your body adjusts to the new situation. The feeling of hunger subsides, your stomach calms down. The rosehip tea they served us always tasted terrible, with or without sweetener. The furry, unpleasant taste never left my mouth until the end of the strike. In the first days, your body refuses any kind of effort, your muscles tremble and don't want to work. But then my body accepted the new diet and I was able to do my exercises again, almost like before the strike. It is important not to demand too much of yourself, to drink a great deal even when you don't feel thirsty.

After about a month on hunger strike, we were brought to the Hamburg remand prison, because Luebeck didn't have the facilities for force feeding at that time. The minute we arrived at Hamburg, it became clear to me that I had been in a Dead Wing at Luebeck. The sudden noises, the presence of so many people, the normal prison life - even when very limited - made me feel energised. My blood felt electrified and I was filled with a great feeling of euphoria. For three days and three nights, I was unable to sleep. After that, I broke down again. The realisation that I had actually been in the Dead Wing came too late. It no longer helped me to defend myself against the months of total isolation.

Irmgard Moeller and Ilse Stachowiak were in the Hamburg women's prison at that time; Inga Hochstein came later. We could see each other during our exercise periods, because our cells all faced the yard. But we didn't have any recreation and, from our cells, we couldn't talk to one another. It was clear to everybody that I was teetering on the brink and wavering and I was criticised heavily in the *Info* because of this. However, I was no longer able to defend myself or even to get involved in discussions about it. I reacted by being even more afraid and drew further into myself. After that, I was excluded from the *Info* distribution list.

This hurt my pride, but I acquiesced. I felt relieved that I no longer had to force myself to deal with the discussions, something which I didn't feel able to do and which merely put me under pressure every single time.

After six weeks on hunger strike, force feeding began in Hamburg, as it already had in other prisons. A troop of about six warders came to me in my cell and dragged me off violently to a cellar. In the cell that had been prepared for this purpose, a prison doctor was waiting with a tube. With force, the warders pressed me down onto a kind of dentist's chair and held my arms and legs down. When they were unable to insert the tube in my nose, they tried to prise open my mouth with a piece of wood so that they could force the tube into my throat. If they succeeded, a nutritional fluid would then be pumped with great haste into my stomach. The other prisoners were given the same treatment as I was, the procedure being carried out every two days or even daily. Every time they did it, it was like a rape and, afterwards, I lay for hours on my cot, shattered and unable to think while I listened to the screams of the others who were being humiliated by the force feeding.

In the newspapers, on the radio and on television there were daily reports about the hunger strike, reports that were full of lies and threats. They gave the impression that the hunger strike was a kind of armed operation by the urban guerrilla, as if it were a kidnapping or an armed takeover. The reports never dealt with the terms and conditions of our imprisonment, but always denounced our struggle and put us down as human beings. They said we were eating, that we lived in our cells better than people on the outside. They said we thought we were better than the normal prisoners, that we were egoistic, violent, obsessed with power, immoral and dangerous. They also said that we were not fighting for a change in the terms and conditions of imprisonment, which were excellent, but that we were campaigning for a continuation of the armed struggle and the destruction of democracy. It was always the same journalists who reported about us on the radio and in the newspapers and they contradicted themselves all the time. The aim was simply to keep the press campaign against us on the boil using any arguments they could find. I listened to and read all of this and thought despairingly, "Doesn't anybody realise that they're lying? Do people have such short memories that they can't remember what they were told two weeks ago?" The press reports took their toll on me, making me feel threatened and defenceless.

Over the weeks, it gradually became clear to me that we would not achieve the goals of the hunger strike that were to have the isolation abolished and have us integrated into normal prison life. When I had begun the hunger strike, I had needed this goal to survive. The isolation was killing me and I wanted, with all of the strength I had left, to get out of there. As I increasingly doubted that I would be able to achieve this goal with my hunger strike, my strength also waned.

One day, I was lying on my cot, as always shattered and humiliated by the force feeding, when the cell door flew open and my mother was suddenly standing next to me. I hadn't seen her since 1971, before my first arrest, and I had refused to have any contact with her since that time. Now she was standing there crying and begging of me, "You're my daughter, and I don't want you to die, there's so much left to live." I was incapable of reacting. Her sobbing touched me. I said nothing, and my mother stood there sobbing silently. After a few minutes, the warders took her out of the cell.

I was absolutely furious at the perfidiousness of this situation. There was a special section of the prison for visitors outside of the building that housed the cells and our visits never occurred without the supervision of at least one warder and one police officer. And now they had brought my mother to my cell. I should have thrown her out, but that never occurred to me. I immediately had feelings of guilt. Why did I react wrongly, why had I not thrown her out and ruined this trick of the Office for State Security? Nobody except for prison employees or the pigs had ever been able to enter any of our cells. Not even when Holger Meins was already on his deathbed and no longer able to walk was his lawyer allowed to see him in his cell. Instead, they had brought him to the visitors' room on a stretcher. But they had brought my mother to my cell so that I would break off my hunger strike.

Holger died on 9 November 1974. It was clear to us that the government had killed him deliberately with the force feeding.

The amount of calories that your body is given daily is decisive in force feeding. If it is less than the amount that the body needs, the person loses weight more quickly than he would in a hunger strike without this supply of calories. Holger had been force fed brutally every day with a dose of 400 to 800 calories. However, an adult needs at least 1,200 to 1,600 calories a day in order to survive. Holger had lost weight rapidly, far quicker than through the hunger strike alone.

In the following week, *Stern* magazine published a double-page photo of Holger's dead body, starved to a mere skeleton. His death and this photo horrified and frightened me.

For all of the RAF members, Holger's death was the government's unmistakeable demonstration that they would never give in to our demand to abolish isolation at any price. This realisation led the prisoners on hunger strike to issue a new demand: that they could live together in groups and therefore end at least the individual isolation. To be put into groups with their comrades, with other political prisoners, something that was a matter of course in most countries, where the political prisoners were separated from the other prisoners, but had contact with one another, and could lead some kind of social life together, even if strictly controlled. However, the federal republican state had its methods for "the perfect solution", the Germany model.

After two months of hunger strike and force feeding and after I had realised that the government did not intend to abolish the isolation, I broke off my hunger strike. I couldn't continue.

A few days before me, Gerhard Mueller, who had been arrested in 1972 and who was also in Hamburg in prison, had also broken off his strike. The fact that we had stopped striking was featured that evening on the news. It was broadcast as a sign that the hunger strike was crumbling and that it was expected to end soon.

Gerhard Mueller tried to contact me via the prison doctor. I refused to have any contact. I didn't want to join up with someone else in my defeat. The other prisoners who were continuing their hunger strike were absolutely furious with me, accusing me of having weakened their cause by breaking off. Using me as an example, it could now be maintained that the hunger strike was falling apart. In the eyes of the others, I was a traitor to the political struggle and they were afraid I might be willing to cooperate with the police. Gerhard Mueller began denouncing his comrades. I didn't think about doing so for a second. I learned that Gerhard Mueller had fired his previous defence lawyer and had begun talking to the Federal Criminal Police. He made statements against his former comrades and managed to make a deal with the Office of the Federal Prosecutor that they would drop the charges of murder for the shooting and killing of the policeman, Schmid, in Hamburg, in exchange for his willingness to appear in the trials against the RAF as a chief witness for the prosecution.

I began eating again, but I didn't feel good doing so. When the time came for lunch or the evening meal to be brought, the warders shouted right along the whole length of the corridor, "Meal for Schiller". This went on every day for three months. Inga Hochstein, who had been arrested during the hunger strike and who had joined it immediately, as well as Christa, Irmgard and Ilsa could and were supposed to hear it. And every day, I listened as the four women were dragged off to be force fed. Every day, I saw how they became thinner and weaker. I didn't know what to do any more, felt completely paralysed. I couldn't restart the hunger strike, because I knew that I couldn't keep it up, yet I wanted nothing more. Some of the warders and the prison director Heinemann tried to talk to me and to establish contact with me the way it had been during my first period in prison in 1972. I had been criticised for this in the Group from 4.2, but I had never accepted this criticism. Now, the confrontation had become so hard since the Dead Wing in Luebeck and the hunger strike, that there was no more space for differentiation. It became a question of my self-assertion to close myself off to everything that had to do with the judiciary and the state apparatus.

Heinemann had headed the troops that had dragged us to be force fed. The warders had locked the doors after these torture sessions. Now they were asking me whether I wanted to be moved to another floor away from the hunger strikers. I said NO.

After five months, the others broke off their hunger strike on 2 February 1975 without having achieved results. On the outside, a new RAF group had obviously formed after our arrest, and they now issued a short statement in which they appealed to the prisoners to break off their hunger strike and announced that they were going to act.

There had been much support for the demands of the prisoners during the strike. I was hardly aware of this in my fight for self-assertion, as I had been too involved with myself. That's why I can't say much about it, but, for example, after Holger's death, there had been demonstrations everywhere, even in very small towns. In many places, there had been heavy street fighting and a demonstration had taken place in Berlin with more than 15,000 people. The 2 June Movement tried to kidnap the Berlin Supreme Judge, Guenter von Drenkmann from his flat. When he resisted, he was shot dead.

Already before the beginning of the hunger strike, there had been a widespread public in Europe who were against the terms and conditions of imprisonment of the political prisoners, against the isolation torture. Jean-Paul Sartre visited Andreas Baader during the strike on 4 December 1974 in Stammheim. In France, Italy and other countries, the intellectuals and the groups of the Left turned against the attempt of the German state to destroy the prisoners from the guerrilla. The terms and conditions of imprisonment played a significant role in many political discussions and activities.

However, neither this political mobilisation nor the five-month hunger strike were able to bring about changes to the terms and conditions of imprisonment. Together with the USA, West Germany had become the forerunner for the policy of fighting revolutionary movements in all NATO states. And once again it had happened – in December a bomb exploded in a locker at Bremen's main railway station. Mueller, who was now cooperating with the Office for State Security, declared it to be an RAF action, but for me, one thing was clear: after the bomb threats in the Stuttgart city centre or the SAM-7 missiles targeted at the Volkspark stadium, the state itself had now planted a bomb.

During the hunger strike, and particularly after it had been abandoned, police and prison warders had been lying in wait, expecting things to blow up between me and the other four women. A little over three weeks after the end of the collective hunger strike, I was exercising in the yard, when Irmgard Moeller appeared at the window of her cell and, using our finger language, asked me if I wanted to talk and spend my recreation period with her. I nodded. After finishing my period in the yard, I asked to be brought to Irmgard's cell. It was Friday afternoon. They told me that permission for a recreation period hadn't been submitted in my case and the judge responsible for making such decisions had gone home for the weekend and I would have to wait until Monday.

In the past weeks, the total isolation had been lifted for the hunger-striking women and they were allowed to meet up in their cells two at a time. During the hunger strike, in particular, this decision had had a control function as the women's lives were in danger and it was to be expected at any moment that they collapse or fall into a coma. It made the warders' work easier if the prisoners were not alone, otherwise they would have had to sit in the cells with them 24 hours a day to make sure that everything was OK. Because I had broken off my hunger strike earlier than the others, this decision didn't apply to me, so I had to wait until Monday. When

Monday morning came, the first thing I did was to request recreation time with Irmgard. They brought me to the yard, and then I was able to go to her. We hugged each other and were just about to talk, when the door opened and they announced: "Ms Schiller, pack your things, you're being transferred to Luebeck."

Sensory deprivation

The Office for State Security had waited to see whether the others would mob me after the end of the hunger strike. When they saw that they had deluded themselves in this point, the only option they came up with was to finish me off completely.

On the way to Luebeck, I wondered where they would put me now. I was sure that I would be placed in the normal prison building this time, maybe even be returned to normal prison conditions. When we arrived in Luebeck, however, they led me directly to the Dead Wing. There could be no doubt about it: they wanted to squeeze the only life I had left out of me. However, this time I was familiar with the torture method they planned to use against me and their intentions were clear to me. I was now in a position to consciously defend myself against these methods and to fight and gain back something of what I had lost before.

At the same time as my transfer back to Luebeck, the court decided that relations were allowed to visit me. This had never been the case during my entire term in prison and the motivation behind it was as clear as my transfer was. They were trying to make it impossible for me to busy myself with political matters and they wanted to revert me back to my old, pre-political structures.

I thought about my situation and decided to accept visits from my parents, my brother and my sister. Since that day, when the Federal Criminal Police had sent my mother into my cell during the hunger strike and I hadn't thrown her out, I felt the necessity of once more going into things directly with my family. I wrote my mother nasty, insulting letters and, when she visited, anger welled up in me when I saw my parents smiling at the warders and the supervising police team, seeking their confirmation of my description of the terms and conditions of my imprisonment.

On their second visit, my father said I was now totally alone, that there was nobody who wanted to help me any more and that I was therefore dependent on them. The attitude and the words of my parents confirmed to me what I had expected: there wasn't even the slightest basis for discussion between us, they still wanted to treat me like a child who did not have the right to make her own decisions and whose ideas they did not need to respect. I broke off the visit after five minutes and refused to have any further contact with them. The situation with my sister was more or less the same.

I was then able to carry out the discussion I had been seeking with my brother. He had taken up his studies in Business Economics again and was just finishing his degree. He didn't like it any more, but it was what he knew. He spoke more slowly and deliberately than before and, for me, it was as if a part of him were absent.

Our discussions hovered around the same subject again and again - the fact that every person is responsible for his own life. My responsibility for me and for my past, for my decisions and my mistakes - and our parents' responsibility for their past, for what had happened in German history, for the consequences of their actions or their failure to act. We discussed the structures within our family, our upbringing. When it came down to it, my mother had always taken a subordinate role to my father when he threatened us with violence or when he actually used violence against us. In these situations, she was never on our side. The most that she dared to do, was to show solidarity with us secretly in our bedrooms. We spoke about the fact that our parents were a product of their times, walking a thin line between societal constraints and individual will, but nevertheless still responsible for their actions, just as we ourselves were.

At the end of February 1975, at the time when I was transferred back to Luebeck, the 2 June Movement had kidnapped the head of the Berlin CDU[15] Peter Lorenz and achieved the release of five prisoners who were then flown to South Yemen.

At the end of April 1975, I was listening to the radio one evening, when it was announced that the German Embassy in Stockholm had been occupied by the Holger Meins Commando Unit. In the following hours, I learned from the newspapers and on the radio, that this RAF command unit was using the occupation to demand the release of 26 prisoners who were then to be flown out of the country. To my great surprise, my name was on the list.

The commando unit shot and killed two embassy employees in order to lend force to their demands and, twelve hours after the operation had begun, some of the explosives planted by the unit in the embassy went off. However, this explosion had not been triggered off by the commando unit, but presumably from outside. Ulrich Wessel was killed during the operation, and Siegfried Hausner suffered burns which were life-threatening without specialist medical treatment. Despite protests by the Swedish doctor who was treating him, the German government exerted pressure to have him brought to the prison in Stammheim, instead of to a hospital, and he died there eleven days later without medical care.

Before my arrests in 1971 and 1974, I had got to know all of the members of the commando unit in different situations, some in the SPK, and some in Hamburg following my first release from prison. Ulrich Wessel was a very decent, meticulous and considerate person. Siegfried was rather the opposite. When I met him for the first time in the SPK, he was about seventeen years old, angry and speedy, and had just run away from home.

The operation had failed. The comrades were dead or had been arrested. I wouldn't have wanted to carry out this operation myself, but it nevertheless gave me courage. "Outside", the world beyond the prison walls, once again existed for me. I no longer felt buried behind those walls, out of reach from any echo of life. Saigon, the capital city of South Vietnam, fell and the photos of the last American helicopters with the collaborators who had been left behind trying to hang on to them appeared in all the newspapers. I cheered at the end of this long war and the defeat of US imperialism. I also studied the literature I had on the states that had just achieved independence from Portugal – Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau. A great deal of material on this subject had gathered in my cell: newspapers, books, collections of articles. Once again, I saw that the story of 500 years of colonialism was always the same at the heart of the matter. The European colonial powers maintained that they had brought civilisation to the 'wild natives', but the reality was completely different. In Guinea-Bissau in 1960, the main export was peanuts and the main import alcohol, and 99 percent of the population were illiterate. The Europeans didn't give a damn about the people there, and yet Portugal had sent 40,000 soldiers to this small country after the struggle for liberation had begun there in the 1960s. I read and read and, once again, this feeling of hate welled up in me, this will to do something to counteract the misery in the Third World. I ordered an atlas so that I could gain as exact a picture as possible of these countries. We had been given permission by the judiciary to use a record player and I listened to records with songs from Angola and Guinea-Bissau. I loved the rhythm, the deep voices and the sad melodies and I tried to sing along with them, although I couldn't speak Portuguese. I had a Portuguese language course sent to me and began learning. However, it was hopeless. I listened to the strange sounds which seemed to have nothing to do with the written words on the page and I didn't know how to move my mouth to form the necessary sounds. I looked at the faces of the black people and the beauty of the landscape on the record covers and in the books. I would have loved to have travelled there. And again and again, I listened to their music, or to the sad songs from

Chile that brought tears to my eyes.

I once again remained alone in the Dead Wing for just under six months. There was no *Info* any more, as its distribution had been rendered impossible at the beginning of 1975 with the changes in the law, generally referred to as the Baader-Meinhof Act, which restricted the rights of the defence lawyers. However, now and again, my lawyer brought me a small letter from the Hamburg women in which they told me what they were currently working on and asked after me.

I read written papers and material on the Hamburg psychiatrist Jan Gross' research project at the Eppendorf University Clinic on sensory deprivation, that is, the deprivation of all sensory stimuli and the opportunities this presented for manipulating people. This research work clearly had something to do with the terms and conditions of our imprisonment. West Germany and the USA were leaders in this field of research and in putting the results of this into practice in the architectural design of their prisons. I tried to get hold of material on the effects of the isolation practices, so that I could better understand what had happened to me in the Dead Wing and what it was I now had to prepare myself for.

It's true that I already knew more about it, but this didn't take away the effects of the total isolation. I froze continuously, although it was summer. I felt a weight on my chest that made it difficult for me to breathe and I was convinced that I had lung cancer. The pressure in my ears never ceased. Any kind of physical exercise cost me a great deal of effort, as did reading one single page in a book. I had to gather all my strength to stop myself from sinking into my mood swings that fluctuated from apathy to intense aggression.

One day, when I took a vibrant blue scarf out of a large envelope, tears came to my eyes the minute I saw the colour. This clear, intense blue stirred up deep emotions in me. In the cell and in the Wing, everything was white, grey or washed-out green and the warders' uniforms were dark blue. Colours were as rare as lively sounds.

After five or six months alone in the Dead Wing, they brought Christa Eckes to me again. We were both aware of what had gone on between us the year before and so, this time, being together with her helped me to understand reactions that were a product of the isolation and that I had also noticed in myself, without understanding their cause. It relieved me greatly to hear that the other prisoners also often felt the same way.

In the cell alone, small things could take on horrible dimensions, if you didn't find some way to laugh about them and to deal with them calmly. Since the long hunger strike, it was impossible for me to store food in my cell. I guzzled every single thing I bought at my weekly shopping on the same day I got them. When I received Helma's birthday parcel full of sweets, I stuffed myself with these treasures non-stop for two days, until I felt sick. On the third day, I threw all that was left down the toilet, because I didn't know how to deal with them. I judged myself for completely lacking in discipline, criticised my loss of self-control and regarded this as an expression of the collapse of my political identity. When Christa came to me, she told me that all of the other political prisoners in Hamburg felt the same way and they had therefore stored all the food they had in Christa's cell, the only one of them who suffered from the opposite problem since the strike, hardly eating anything at all. When I heard this from Christa, I was so relieved I wasn't alone in what I was going through, that I couldn't stop grinning for a quarter of an hour and tears came to my eyes.

We read the newspapers every day together and discussed what was in them. The trial against Gudrun Ensslin, Ulrike Meinhof, Jan-Carl Raspe and Andreas Baader had been on since the end of May in Stuttgart-Stammheim. While the hunger strike was still on, the government had begun the trial at the end of 1974 by making changes to the law. It was now forbidden for those accused to have the same lawyer, with paragraph 129 stating that each defendant had to have a different lawyer. However, there weren't that many lawyers who were willing to defend us in the face of the enormous public animosity. What is more, it was now possible to carry out the trial in the absence of the defendant. The law proceeded from the assumption that "hunger strikes were used to induce a state of unfitness for trial". Before the trial began, Andreas Baader's three defence lawyers Klaus Croissant, Christian Stroebele and Kurt Groenewald, who had visited us the longest in prison and who knew the most about the terms and conditions of imprisonment that had been imposed on us, as well as the trial documents, were barred from the court. Attorney General Buback accused them of being "mouthpieces" and "members of the criminal organisation of their clients", because they used "the terminology of the extreme Left, such as isolation torture, annihilation detention, brain-washing wing".

The trial took place in a bunker that had been built especially for that purpose, a symbol, poured in cement, of the methods with which the state apparatus intended to overcome the RAF phenomenon. A huge amount of newspaper articles about this show trial poured into our cells and a great deal was done to turn the real facts on their heads. Every single application concerning the terms and conditions of imprisonment was regarded as an attempt to delay the proceedings, the four defendants were made out to be demonic, broken monsters. The Springer publishing group's *Welt* put it succinctly: "Every attempt to give the terrorists a human face is irresponsible and unintelligent."

Christa and I studied the petitions from the lawyers and the four comrades in the Stammheim trial and we looked for all the information we could find on the terms and conditions of imprisonment and the purpose of the isolation torture. While doing so, we came across an explanation for something we had already experienced ourselves. After years in total isolation, putting two people together intensifies the effects of the isolation. We now made an effort not to forget this new piece of information in our day-to-day dealings with one another and, for a time, we succeeded.

The trial was accompanied by sensationalist reports in the press that the RAF had stolen mustard gas and that the RAF wanted to pollute Lake Constance with atomic waste. In September, a bomb exploded in Hamburg's main station. Christa and I tried to remember all of the threats and actions of this type that had occurred since the beginning of the armed struggle in West Germany. As we had already been reading books from anti-insurgency specialists and former CIA agents for some time, we knew that campaigns like this were typical of the methods used by secret services. For those defending the existing order, these were very decisive battlegrounds. The aim was to break down solidarity, spread fear, cause insecurity. Every normal citizen was supposed to be convinced that he could be the next victim and that the guerrilla fighters didn't give a damn about the lives of the population at large.

After about four or six weeks of being imprisoned in the Dead Wing together, Christa and I were transferred to Hamburg, as the trial against the "Group from 4.2" was to begin in November.

The death of Ulrike Meinhof and a death threat

Our transfer to Hamburg brought the surprising news that we could now move into one cell in groups of two. Two medical experts had forecast that Irmgard Moeller would be unfit for trial if something didn't change immediately regarding the conditions of her isolation. We were excited. After such a long time in total isolation, with the one small change that, recently, we had been allowed to spend one or two hours a day together during recreation, this complete suspension of the isolation seemed like the end of our torture. I moved into a cell with Christa Eckes and Irmgard moved in with Ilse Stachowiak. And, with this, I had fallen into a new trap. From now on, it was no longer possible for any of us to be alone, even for a short time. This absolute reversal of the situation after being constantly alone created an unbearable situation and a great deal of emotional tension and the first one of us to break under this enormous exertion was me. After a short time, I began to stare at every movement Christa made in the cell, observing her all the time. I was unable to think or do anything for myself. Christa reacted with aggression and rejection, because she was just as incapable of bearing the situation as I was. Neither of us had any space to breathe.

After a little less than a month, I applied to be transferred back to a cell on my own. From then on, things got even worse. I could no longer read, no longer write, and, for more than one year, I was unable to form a complete sentence.

The other three women had to fight for themselves, meaning that they could no longer help me. They didn't spend any more recreation time with me. Only rarely did one of them come into my cell to see whether I was still in such a numb state. Faced with my helplessness, which they could do nothing about, they always left my cell again after a few minutes.

Inga was the only one to come into the yard with me. She had never belonged to the RAF and there was no other organisation of which she was a part.

Alone in my cell, I paced back and forth for hours on end. Two steps from one side to the other. Four large or six normal steps from the door to the window. I had no idea how long I would keep this up. All that was important, was that I make it to the next morning. I tried reading a book, but gave up after one paragraph as I didn't understand what I was reading. Sometimes, a sentence found its way through to me, one from the torture camps in Vietnam, for example, and this gave me the feeling of being alive and that I would somehow make my way back up again. But then I became numb again.

I broke off my last contact with the outside, with Helma. As my "adoptive mother", she had worked in the groups in which those members of the political prisoners' families who had some respect for the guerrilla struggle and for the prisoners met together regularly, even if they didn't all share the same political convictions. Since I had broken off my hunger strike, Helma had been having problems in the groups of prisoners' relations, because I was no longer part of the strike.

At this time, a time in which the state apparatus was stepping up its fight against the prisoners from the guerrilla, in which the hunger strike that ended in the death of Holger Meins demonstrated to everyone how hard the confrontation had become and in which the trial in Stammheim was on, the political debates about the right way forward within the groups that showed solidarity with us became increasingly intense, until they came to a head in 1977. The courts often banned visits. We were to engage in as few political debates as possible and nobody on the outside was supposed to know us any more, so that the psychological warfare that described us as hard, insensitive, politically naive and egoistic desperadoes could go unchallenged. Because I was no longer capable, in this acute situation, to respond to what was going on around me, I also burned my last bridges. I told Helma that she should stop visiting me and stop writing to me, too.

My teeth went to the dogs, one after the other. I was born shortly after the War, meaning that I had always had a calcium deficiency and was lacking in what else was necessary to develop stable bones and teeth. In prison, I was once again not getting what I needed: no sun and an insufficient amount of vitamins and minerals in my food. The dentist only came when it was absolutely necessary. At the end of December 1975, I was in terrible pain. My gum had peeled away from the nerve of one of my back teeth and it was now lying exposed. I could hardly eat any more and every drink, whether warm or cold, and every blast of air burned like hell. The prison dentist happened to be on holiday. I thought my head was going to explode with the pain and there was nothing in the cell to distract me from it. Nothing but me and my pain. The ten days became an eternity. Then, all of a sudden, the pain stopped. Was the nerve dead? I didn't know. However, since then, I have never had toothache again. My subconscious will not allow that kind of pain to get through to my conscious mind any more. Since then, I have also stoically put up with every single dental treatment without an anaesthetic.

The process against those of us who had been arrested on 4 February 1974 was due to begin in November 1975. There were heavy arguments between the lawyers and the prisoners from the RAF about the strategy to be used at the trial, which was to be held that year at several different locations. Most of the prisoners wanted to concentrate all their efforts on Stammheim. It was there that the state apparatus was using its heaviest ammunition, that's where there was the most press coverage, and it was there that the founders of the RAF were being tried. This discussion had also become necessary because of the newly introduced rule that stopped a lawyer defending more than one defendant. What's more, we from the 4.2. group had little interest in taking part in a trial at all, because of the mess we were in. I didn't take part in these discussions and I wasn't interested in the trial. It was clear to me that the judgment would be a political decision, one that had already been made in the selection of the members of the court, the choice of Public Prosecutors and the way the charges had been formulated. And I definitely didn't want to be torn apart in the press again, the way I had been in all the years since 1971. The Chief Judge was the same one who had acted in my first trial – Ziegler. He wasn't one of those who was hell bent on setting an example, who regarded themselves as part of a "democracy" at war. The charges were mainly collective ones and there weren't any specific charges against me as an individual. In contrast to Stammheim, a terror verdict was not expected in our case.

When the trial finally began at the beginning of 1976, Helmut Pohl, Wolfgang Beer, Ilse Stachowiak and Christa Eckes all read out a declaration. Eberhard and I sat watching apathetically. Eberhard had separated from the others some time ago and Kay had been released from prison because of a life-threatening illness. After that, we had expelled ourselves from the trial by standing up and making a racket. At the same time, we fired the defence lawyers we trusted, so that they could not be forced to conduct the case. All that was left was the assigned counsel of the court, described as the "forced counsel" by us. The Stammhein trial had begun with the introduction of 'defence lawyers' who were not trusted by the defendants. This was a measure so that the trial could be brought to an end after they had rejected all of our own lawyers whom we trusted, without the defendants having any real representation. Ulrike, Andreas, Gudrun and Jan wanted to conduct their own cases and the government tried everything at its disposal to prevent this.

We didn't want to conduct our case, but we did want to show at least what the changes in the law implied, which was a meaningless trial in which the defendants were not represented in any way at all. The lawyers of the forced counsel had been chosen by the court without our consent and were paid by the state. We refused to speak one single word with them throughout the entire trial, which lasted eight months.

At that time, the highest sentence for membership of a criminal organisation was five years. Because the court was unable to prove anything specific that we had been involved in and the Office of the Federal Prosecutor also did not have any political interest in dragging the details of our acts into the public arena, we were all given prison sentences of between four and five years, which were relatively short in comparison to others. Only Christa was sentenced to longer, because of the bank robbery. I was given four years and three months in prison.

The trial against us continued without our participation; the one in Stammheim was in the middle of looking at the evidence and the four prisoners there were working intensively on their Vietnam declarations concerning the actions of the RAF in 1972 against the US military bases in Heidelberg and Frankfurt. As always, I was alone in my cell listening to the radio. The programme was suddenly interrupted with the news that Ulrike Meinhof had been found dead in her cell that morning and that she had committed suicide. It was 9 May 1976.

Everything in me tensed up, my watch stopped because my body's magnetic field had changed completely, my heart began to beat wildly and thoughts bombarded my brain: what had happened? Suicide? Could that be possible? Ulrike? Like many times before, I knelt at my bedside, supporting my elbows and upper body on the mattress and tried to bring some order into my head. Suicide? I had felt dreadful for months, but I had always rejected any thoughts of suicide. It seemed to me that, if I killed myself, I would be offering up my life to the state and the media for them to prey on me, and I would be giving them the chance to exploit the situation, as they always saw a suicide as an act of despair against the comrades. Even if I no longer knew how to continue the fight, I still did not want to hand something like that to them on a plate. Had Ulrike decided otherwise?

I just couldn't believe that would be the case. They had never managed to shut her up and, right up to that day, she had always fought for everything. There had been serious arguments in the past year between Gudrun and Ulrike, I knew that. However, that was also part of the struggle to survive under the conditions of the long-term isolation, which is designed to create aggression. I had experienced this myself. And both Gudrun and Ulrike were very emotional women. I could maybe have imagined her falling silent, but she didn't.

And now the Stammheim trial was entering a critical phase, one in which Ulrike was actively involved. Despite the many changes to the law to restrict the rights of the defence and despite the constant barrage from the press against the Stammheim prisoners, this trial had become a tribunal with international resonance, during which Ulrike, Andreas, Gudrun and Jan had issued many statements. It wasn't the silence of isolation, where every sentence, every scream went without response. In the trial, she could raise her voice and it had an effect. Why should Ulrike commit suicide at this stage in the proceedings?

I walked back and forth in my cell and thought, "It can only have been murder." Why did they do it? I remembered that the Nazis had murdered the poet Erich Moesha using the method "suicide by hanging". This method was used throughout the world against political prisoners who refused to be broken. And now it had happened in the supposedly "democratic" Federal Republic of Germany. It had always been their goal to kill the leaders of resistance movements. In Guinea Bissau, Amilcar Cabral was murdered in 1976, in Mozambique, Mondlane in 1969, Che Guevara in 1967. I thought back to 1972, when the rumour had been spread that Ulrike had committed suicide because of differences within the group.

A few days later, as I was pacing up and down my cell, a warder opened the door and said, "Come with me, someone is here to visit you." Visit? I never got visits, and I didn't correspond with anyone any more, so who could it be? "Who is it? I'm not expecting anyone and, if I don't know who it is, then I'm not leaving my cell."

Ten minutes went by and then my cell door was opened again and two officers from the Federal Criminal Police, whom I had known from my first arrest, entered. One of them asked, "Ms Schiller, have you still not had enough?" This gave rise to a wave of fury in me. The whole time, they had been observing in detail how my state had been getting worse from day to day. They now thought that, after Ulrike's death, I would be at an end and would therefore collaborate with them. I screamed, "Get out!" and looked for the nearest thing I could find to throw at them. They fled from my cell.

From that moment, I started to feel better. I once again had a clear view of what effect the terms and conditions of imprisonment they had imposed were supposed to have on us. I once again had a clear picture of who was ordering them and using them against me. In isolation, over time, you lose your idea of everything sensual, and that is exactly the point where the hole in which you lose yourself opens up. Because nothing is definite any more, nothing is tangible. You have nothing but yourself and the walls, and you have to get a hold of everything else through your thoughts.

I told the others that the pigs had been in my cell. It became clear to them that they had made a mistake and had misjudged me. They realised they had abandoned me to the Office for State

Security and had ceased to see me as a comrade who needed help. From then on, we started spending recreation time together and talking to one another again. We read the declarations made at trial by the Stammheim prisoners. We swapped newspapers and I started reading the news again intensively. Among the articles, I found interviews with Gerhard Mueller about the RAF. He used the press reports about differences within the group after Ulrike's death to pave the way for his deal with the Office of the Federal Prosecutor, which offered him acquittal on the murder of the policeman he had shot in exchange for making a statement at Stammheim. I read how he spoke about Andreas, Gudrun and the structure of the RAF and I found it no less than obscene. None of us from the RAF was the model of "the new human being" or a saint, none of us could live up to our own idea of a new kind of human relationship, and, in our day-to-day lives, we repeatedly fell into the same traps, but this had nothing to do with Mueller's clichés. We had to do something about this situation. I thought that I could issue a declaration at Stammheim about the deal he had made. I could prove the details of what he was doing with the Office for State Security, because I knew that he had been the one who had shot in the night I was arrested in Hamburg. He had been charged with this, but not sentenced. He had already spilled everything to the Office for State Security before the trial began, but it was only after the court decision had been made that he was willing to publicly play the role of chief witness.

I went to Irmgard's cell to tell her about what I was considering. She thought it was a good idea and suggested that we inform the Stammheim prisoners via the lawyers and ask whether they agreed to it.

About a week later, it was a Friday, my cell was opened by a warder at eight o'clock in the morning – there are some details, no matter how small, that you never forget as long as you live. She had a letter in her hand that she wanted to give to me. It was a sealed white envelope with nothing but my name on it, and without an official stamp of any kind. Normally the letters that were handed over to me had at least two official stamps, one from the court and one from the prison. Apart from that, the letters had always been opened and then visibly closed again with an official seal. All of these typical markings were missing. The moment she handed the letter to me, the warder realised this herself. She drew back the envelope and said, "I have to ask first if I can give you this letter, something's not quite right."

Half an hour later, I was called to my lawyer. I was taken along several corridors, up stairways and past barred windows to the part of the building where the cells were to be found. Here we were able to speak to the lawyers. All of a sudden, Gerhard Mueller was standing in front of me. I already knew him from the SPK in 1971 as he had also been a member. They had brought him to Hamburg for this meeting with me, possibly to persuade me by this personal encounter not to make a statement against him. I pushed him aside and went to my lawyer, telling her about what had just happened.

After about three quarters of an hour, I returned to my cell. Five minutes after that, the same warder brought the letter that she had wanted to give me that morning. The letter was still unopened and not stamped. It was a letter from Gerhard Mueller that the Office for State Security had had delivered to me without any controls whatsoever.

The letter contained the following: first of all, Mueller reminded me of our common history in the SPK and that he had always liked me as a woman. Then he put the blame on me for the failure of the group that had been arrested in February 1974. He said that I also carried the political responsibility for the group, even in prison, and that it was my job to bring them down to earth by ending the struggle. Finally, he threatened that I would suffer the same fate as Ulrike if I undertook anything against him.

This was a direct death threat if I decided to speak out against Mueller. They could only have found out about my plan to do so by bugging my cell. I immediately went to Irmgard's cell with Mueller's letter. We decided to quickly put it in a safe place as evidence. Luckily, her lawyer came by that very day and she gave him the letter.

On that same afternoon, 19 June 1976, we heard on the radio that a bomb attack had been carried out against the office of my forced counsel, killing one office employee. We regarded this to be an act carried out by the Office for State Security. On that Friday afternoon, it became clear to all of us that I could no longer stay alone in my cell. On Saturday morning, my cell was ransacked while I was in the yard. The Office for State Security was looking for the letter from Mueller.

I moved back into a cell with Christa. Irmgard and Ilsa had remained together the whole time.

I didn't vacillate for a minute about making a statement at Stammheim. In view of these events I was convinced that making the statement was the right thing to do. First of all, I drafted a written statement in my cell about what had happened during the shooting on the night from 21 to 22 October 1971. This was to be the basis of the application by the lawyers to have me called as a witness in Stammheim. Jan asked me whether I also wanted to say something about Holger and my experiences with him. I tried to put something down on paper, but I didn't succeed. Holger had been important to me, but I just couldn't picture him any more the way he was when he was alive. I couldn't think of anything good to say about the time before my first arrest and I couldn't remember anything particular that happened. Everything had become abstract, cut off from me. The fact that I had become unable to remember because of my time in isolation hurt and made me feel unsure of myself.

At the end of July, I was flown to Stuttgart by helicopter. I hated these large, noisy machines that the German border police used, where I sat squeezed in between two BKA officers, puking up because I couldn't take the noise of the rotors and the way it shook in the air. When we arrived at Stammheim, they brought me to one of the large, modern concrete blocks there, to the ground floor or the first floor. All of the prisoners and warders I saw were men. The windows were covered with screens of some sort, making it impossible to look outside. I was overcome by a feeling of great anxiety, and thought to myself, so this is where Ulrike was killed. This is where the trial against Andreas, Gudrun and Jan was being conducted and it was here that I was to make my statement the following day. I called out of the window, "Gudrun!" No answer. I shouted louder, "Andreas, Gudrun, Jan!" A prisoner I didn't know called back that they weren't in that wing and that they couldn't hear me. However, Helmut Pohl was somewhere nearby. He had been flown to Stammheim that same day and was also to make a statement. We were able to communicate by shouting to one another. He was taken in before me, and when he came back he called to me, "I don't remember any more what I said, I think I talked a load of shit. That bunker and the whole situation completely freak you out!"

They took me to the "bunker" next, which is what everybody called the building that had been put up especially for this trial. I had to wait a minute in a small cell without a window which was located in the basement, before they took me upstairs. I entered a large stage with glaring lights; the judges' benches were at the top end and, on the right-hand side from where I came, were benches for the lawyers and the prisoners and, at the back on the left, benches for the Federal Prosecutors. All of the benches had microphones. There were uniforms everywhere. When two warders brought me to the witness stand in the middle, at the edge of the stage, I saw a huge gallery below me, as if looking through a haze, where the press and the public were sitting. After the long period of isolation and the helicopter ride, the strain of standing up there in this public arena and talking into a microphone almost tore me apart.

Judge Prinzling asked me my name, age, profession and place of residence. He asked whether I was willing to answer questions. I had thought about that beforehand, about the fact that, to make my statement plausible, which was not a political declaration, but a witness statement, I was going to have to answer some questions. So I said yes, I was willing. I concentrated entirely on that night in Heegbarg and began slowly, perhaps even haltingly, but also confidently, to tell what had happened in the course of that evening, without saying that the other woman had been Ulrike Meinhof. This wasn't about her. When I was finished, Prinzing first of all asked me a few questions about my statement, followed by the lawyers and the Federal Prosecutors. This didn't take very long and then the lawyers asked me if I was also prepared to make statements about the structure of the RAF. Gerhard Mueller had not only accused the prisoners from the RAF of specific acts, but, what is more, backed up by widespread support from the media, he had also reported about the supposed hierarchy, brutality and repression within the group. As a reaction to this, Gudrun, Andreas and Jan had spoken to the lawyers about calling prisoners from the RAF as witnesses, who were to give statements in Stammheim about the group's structure. And this is what many of us did, including Helmut Pohl, Irmgard Moeller and Werner Hoppe, who all sat in this chair before and after me. At the very moment I wanted to say something, my speech – the small structure of thoughts that I had put together in my head -- disappeared beyond my grasp. I started a sentence and lost my thread half way through. Haltingly, I brought forth a few wooden sentences. When Prinzling interrupted, saying that I was only repeating what Helmut had already said, I could only answer, "The same experiences bring about the same results."

At this point, Federal Prosecutor Zeis took the microphone and asked me, with a smug grin on his face, "Can you tell the court, when was the first time you cooperated with the police?" At that exact moment, all microphones were switched off, the Federal Prosecutors and the court stood up, and it was obvious that none of them wanted to hear an answer to this public accusation that I had collaborated with the police. Overcome with a hate that took the feet from under me, I could only scream into the din surrounding me, "Pigs!" and then I was led out again.

My head and my body were aching as if I had been beaten with clubs. Humiliated, small and miserable, I sat in my cell again. I hadn't seen Gudrun, Jan and Andreas at all. Since Ulrike's death, they seldom appeared in court. How did they manage to still maintain so much initiative in a prison like this, in this bunker with the constant back and forth between cell and stage in front of the full public gallery? They had issued a great many declarations during the trial, they constantly came up with new ideas, they were continuously on the move. I tried to picture them as I was waiting to be transported away by helicopter. However, everything that had happened and the prison had built up walls between us, walls that I was no longer able to tear down. It was no longer like 1971, when I could grin at Andreas with an "Ach, get a grip!" when he said something that I thought was stupid. There was no longer the ease and the liveliness in our communication, where a look, a gesture, unspoken and invisible connections to one another, accompanied our words.

Now, everything was cast in cement.

After a little less than twenty-four hours in Stammheim, I was brought back to Hamburg. The discussions about my statement and the confrontation with this had given me strength, despite all of the discrepancies, and had also once again made it possible for me to have a more conscious relationship to myself.

I could now debate, argue and laugh with Irmgard, Christa, Ilse and Inga. However, we were never allowed to meet together as a group, only permitted to spend recreation time together in twos. When sentence was passed against us at the end of September 1976, we hardly paid any attention to it, as we hadn't taken part in the trial and the sentences were not very severe. We preferred to spend our time in discussions or reading, especially the texts and critiques that came from Stammheim. We all had a great number of books, which we swapped with one another, books about the changes in the structure of international capital, about the effects of colonialism and imperialism on the countries of the Third World, about the changes in the control mechanisms in the metropoles, about structures in consumer society. Many books were published on the actions of the CIA and the North American military to suppress opposition in the USA and throughout the entire world. The Vietnam War was over, important agents had dropped out of the CIA and were writing books about their experiences and the information they possessed. A restructuring of the power elites was underway in the USA and, in the course of this, many materials that had been kept secret till then were made public. This was a treasure trove for us and we devoured everything we could get our hands on. In our opinion, much of what we read confirmed the analysis and the practices of the RAF.

Buback, Ponto, Schleyer

In the winter of 1976/77, our small group was suddenly torn apart. Christa Eckes, Irmgard Moeller and Ilse Stachowiak were transferred to Luebeck, while Inga Hochstein and I remained in Hamburg. Irmgard was due to be released soon, so why transfer her now? Inga and I got together. We didn't want to just take this decision of the judiciary without putting up a fight. The only thing that seemed to make any sense to us, was for us five women to go on hunger strike. I hesitated. Within the group of RAF prisoners, there had often been discussions in the past year about the necessity of a renewed hunger strike, and I had to think about whether I could face it again. Thinking about it made me scared. But, it was also clear to me that nothing had changed in the terms and conditions of imprisonment of most of the political prisoners, rather the opposite was true: they stepped up the censorship of our letters and stopped us from communicating with one another. The isolation, both outward and inward, had been stepped up. And now, when faced with the question whether we should go on hunger strike tomorrow to demand that the three women be transferred back from Luebeck to Hamburg, I was unsure. Nevertheless, I decided to join in. This wasn't a "large" hunger strike and would not lead to the kind of confrontation that had happened in 1974. This was about reaching a limited goal and we were only five women.

The three women from Luebeck had come to the same conclusion: hunger strike. And so we began. I was overcome by memories of the time before and after breaking off my hunger strike, but I was able to speak to Inga about this and was therefore not alone. It was winter. I always froze, no matter whether it was summer or winter. The constant feeling of cold became unbearable while on hunger strike; my feet, my hands had no warmth at all; I shivered and nothing, not even three pullovers and a blanket could help me. I felt as if my arms and legs would drop off.

There had just been a huge demonstration against the Brooder nuclear power station, accompanied by serious clashes with the police. We were surprised at the strength of the opposition against nuclear power stations. Would this confrontation open up a new perspective for a revolutionary struggle? We were happy about these developments, but what political significance did a movement have that only mobilised spontaneously to support a limited and specific goal? Naturally, "reports" had been put out that, since January 1976, the RAF had been planning attacks on nuclear power stations, operations using nuclear substances as well as chemical and biological weapons.

After fourteen days on hunger strike, we managed to have Ilse and Christa retransferred back to Hamburg. They brought Irmgard to Stammheim and, after she had sat out her entire sentence, they served her a new arrest warrant for participation in the bomb attack on the US headquarters in Heidelberg. The only witness for the prosecution was Gerhard Mueller.

At the beginning of March 1977, *Spiegel* published a cover story on the nuclear scientist Klaus Traube, who had been bugged illegally by the German intelligence service BND, because he was suspected of being acquainted with an illegal person from a guerrilla group. As a result of all this, other illegal bugging operations aimed at prisoners from the RAF, their lawyers and foreign groups in West Germany, were revealed. The entire media was full of stories about these discoveries. The Minister of the Interior, Maihofer, was made a scapegoat and there was talk about removing him from office. The fact that we, and our lawyers, had been bugged was nothing new to us, and we had repeatedly made this public in the past. We thought the whole thing had been staged. Behind all the hullabaloo, a power struggle was going on between political and secret service factions to do with centralising the secret services under the control of the Office of the Federal Chancellor. Both the civil and the military secret services were to be coordinated in future by the Chief of the Chancellor's Office, meaning that the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defence would have to relinquish some of their power.

We saw this situation as the ideal opportunity to start a new, large-scale hunger strike. We reckoned that the government would not be in a position to counteract our strike immediately, because of the internal power struggles it was involved in. We assumed that the terms and conditions of imprisonment we were subject to would be discussed publicly, because the bugging operations against us were also in the news. This meant that there might be a chance of accomplishing our demands to place the political prisoners together in larger groups. We began the hunger strike on 19 March 1977.

From one day to the next, anything to do with the actions of the secret service disappeared from the daily headlines. This also meant that the fight between the factions within the political machinery had been postponed. Maihofer remained in office and the secret services were not restructured at this point.

The small hunger strike demanding the retransfer of the women from Luebeck had been a kind of trial run for me. It had given me the confidence to join in this larger strike. The fact that I was able to speak to Inga every day gave me a different kind of strength. In 1974, I had had nobody to talk to about my questions, my doubts, or the indignity I felt every time they force fed me. In Hamburg, we now spent our recreation time in twos. I could speak with one of the other women every day. That is why, later on, I was able to remember this strike more clearly than any of the others. While the strike was still on, Annerose Reiche and Brigitte Asdonk, who had been in Berlin for years, and after that in Luebeck, were transferred to Hamburg and so there were now six of us.

Almost three weeks after the start of our hunger strike, on 7 April 1977, the attorney general, Buback, was shot and killed by the RAF Ulrike Meinhof Commando Unit. Their declaration was as follows:

"Buback was directly responsible for the murder of Holger Meins, Siegfried Hausner and Ulrike Meinhof. In his capacity as the Attorney General, that is, as the main nerve centre and coordinating faculty between the judiciary and the West German intelligence services, in close cooperation with the CIA and the NATO Security Committee, he staged and supervised their murder."

After this action against Buback, I hesitated for a moment. Was it right to continue the strike under these conditions? Wouldn't they now take their revenge and use the hunger strike to let several of us die like Holger? However, it then became clear to me that, on the contrary, this act by the Ulrike Meinhof Commando Unit had given us support in this political situation. As a direct reaction, the Federal Prosecutor's Office tried to enforce a ban on all contact to the outside for the Stammheim prisoners, something for which there was no legal basis. This meant that nobody was allowed to see them, not even the lawyers. Three days later, this order had to be retracted. The collective response of all the prisoners on hunger strike towards the ban on contact was an additional thirst strike, which we didn't end until after the Office of the Federal Prosecutor had given up.

To us, this attempt to effect a ban on all contact was clearly an unequivocal death threat against those in Stammheim. In an imprisonment situation where every form of external control is missing, the state can do whatever it wants. Nobody can investigate what happened.

On 20 April 1977, exactly one month after the start of the strike, when we were all still in relatively good condition, a regime of particularly brutal force feeding was started in Hamburg. No other prison was force feeding the prisoners. Every day, a troop of warders stormed into our cells, yanked us and dragged us to the basement and almost broke our bones carrying out the force feeding. They tore my nasal wall with the end of the tube, they knocked out one of Werner's teeth and we all had bruises and bleeding lips. However, after every one of these torture sessions, as I lay battered and humiliated in my cell, Inga came to me and made me go through everything that had happened. While talking about it, I noticed how I was able to breathe again. With the opportunity to impart this terrible experience and therefore to share it with someone, it lost its horror and its power. Although this hunger strike was harder as far as the physical confrontation was concerned than the one in 1974, it was easier for me, because I wasn't alone.

There were many declarations of support for our demands: from Amnesty International, from groups of lawyers in the USA and from very different groups and individuals from many countries in Europe.

These were the conditions under which we finally ended this large hunger strike for the first time on 30 April when the future Attorney General Rebmann gave his written consent on the behalf of the Minister of Justice in Baden-Wurttemberg to put the Stammheim prisoners together in groups. Two days before that the Stammheim court imposed multiple sentences of life imprisonment on Andreas, Gudrun and Jan, as expected.

It took two months for them to partially fulfil their promise in Stammheim. At the beginning of July, Helmut Pohl, Wolfgang Beer and Werner Hoppe were flown from Hamburg to Stammheim. Ingrid Schubert had been flown there from Berlin some months before. This meant that the group there consisted of eight prisoners: Irmgard, Gudrun and Ingrid, Andreas, Jan, Helmut, Wolfgang and Werner. Demands based on medical reports required a minimum of 15 prisoners per group. However, until that point, eight of us had never had the opportunity to work together, laugh together, to see each other daily and to do what was important and what was possible within the limits imposed. Although it had only existed for a short time, this group in Stammheim became very strong, despite the fact that the seventh floor was a kind of glass box in which the prisoners were watched over, observed and investigated twenty-four hours a day using cameras, microphones and the ever-present security agents.

On 30 July 1977, an RAF commando unit tried to kidnap Juergen Ponto, the boss of the Dresdner Bank. He was shot dead during the operation and the response to his death was a state offensive against the prisoners and the last lawyers they had.

In the course of the previous years, the defence lawyers had been subject to procedures in the Disciplinary Committee and criminal proceedings; had been expelled from court on several occasions; some had been banned from practising law; their names had been dragged through the dirt in the press, and threats on their lives had been made. The lawyer Klaus Croissant had fled to France after being threatened with arrest for the third time. Only two lawyers who we trusted were left: Armin Newerla and Arndt Mueller. After Juergen Ponto's death, the Stammheim prisoner group was broken up.

Our joint reaction to this was to immediately go on hunger and thirst strike, which began on 9 August. Three days later, Helmut, Wolfgang and Werner were transferred back to Hamburg. It was the first time, for all of us, that we had gone on both hunger and thirst strike from the very beginning. It is the most difficult and the very last thing a prisoner resorts to as an act of resistance. In contrast to a hunger strike, during which you can and should move around, a thirst strike already severely limits your ability to move and to think properly from the very first day. My mouth felt furry, every single word was difficult, I lost my voice because I needed liquids.

I was only able to whisper incomprehensibly. In this situation, we were also banned from recreation, meaning we were hardly able to communicate with one another, as our voices were too weak to call from one cell window to another.

Before our thirst strike, medical science assumed that a person dies after three or four days without food and liquids. The prison doctors and police scientists looked on in surprise when, on the fifth, sixth, and even seventh day we still managed to walk around the yard. It is true that we walked arduously and slowly, but we walked upright. At first, the warders let us stand under one of the cell windows during our exercise in the yard to carry out a short discussion using our fingers. In order to avoid the microphones, we had learned a finger language and we often used this to talk to one another in our cells as well. The longer the strike went on, the more they tried to prevent every form of communication among us. After that, we had to exchange our finger messages secretly between the yard and the cell windows, which sometimes only gave us sufficient time for a few letters per round. Proper communication became near to impossible.

The state took a harsh stance. There was massive propaganda in the media, and people who openly showed solidarity with the hunger strike and protested against the terms and conditions of imprisonment faced arrest.

It was a really hard fight. Like almost all the others, I was unable to read. I spent most of the time lying immobile on my bed and the hours passed infinitely slowly. On the seventh day of the thirst strike, the prison doctors in Hamburg ordered a blood sample to be taken forcefully. This blood test showed that our blood sugar levels and dialysis values were at an absolute minimum meaning that it would no longer be possible to save someone's life, if they dropped any further. This was the case for all of the prisoners on thirst strike. Two hours later, I was taken on a stretcher trolley at high speed right through the entire prison building to the sick bay. Once there, they strapped me on to a hospital bed so that I was completely unable to move and put me on a drip. I felt every single drop of the infusion flow into my body. For seven hours, I lay there strapped down at the arms, legs, stomach and chest until my body had been given the intended amount of fluids. I saw them bringing more of us into the sick bay, but it was not possible to communicate with one another. When the medical attendant loosened the straps after seven hours, my entire body began to shake uncontrollably and I started to sob, unable to stop. I no longer had any control over my limbs or my nerves. Twelve prisoners were given an infusion for one week in Hamburg. The following infusions didn't take as long as the first – four to five hours.

The prison sick bay was not equipped to deal with so many prisoners in such conditions, so we had to be taken there on trolleys one after the other through the entire prison building. When it came to the comrades in prison, the warders were always trying to injure us by bumping violently into bars or corners. As special security measures still applied to us and we were not supposed to see or speak to any other prisoners, the entire normal prison operations were suspended for one week. In Holstenglacis prison, which at that time housed about 1,400 prisoners, hardly any lawyers' visits could take place. For one week, all other visits and the prisoners' exercise time in the yard had to be cancelled completely.

In order to reverse this total block of the prison, the prison doctors decided to use another type of forced administration of fluids: using a thick cannula, up to one litre of a glucose solution daily was injected into our upper thighs in a period of one hour. Every time this was done, it carried the direct risk of circulatory collapse, because, for a body that is as weakened as ours were, it is an enormous strain to absorb such a large quantity of liquid from out of the muscle of the upper thigh. Our legs were so swollen afterwards that I couldn't get my trousers back on for several hours.

On 10 August, Armin Newerla was arrested for the first time. On 14 August, a bomb exploded in the lawyer's office of Mueller and Newerla in Stuttgart destroying most of it. This office had repeatedly been described in the press as a "recruitment centre" for the RAF. After this, we had no further contact with the prisoners on the seventh floor of Stammheim. We didn't know how they were; we didn't know whether we should continue the strike. The propaganda machine was running at full throttle against us and the struggle was very hard for each of us alone in our cells.

As in 1974, I now lost my courage and my strength. It became clear to me, and to all the others, that we were not going to be able to achieve the reinstatement of the previous conditions with this strike. From that moment on, my ability to persevere with everything for the collective until we could reach a joint decision dwindled. During the strike at that time, and now in this strike, at a decisive moment in the struggle, there was a conflict between my personal decision and the collective Decision, which I was unable to resolve. I ended my strike a few days before the others, as did Ilse. The rest of the prisoners broke off their strike on 2 September. It was clear that continuing the strike would only have meant death, but without a change in the prisoners' situation.

And now, after I had ended a hunger strike before its collective end for the second time, I felt keenly the necessity of assessing and redefining my capabilities and ideas once more. Considering the situation and what I had been through, I had now to separate myself from the other prisoners, from the group, in order to create the space I needed to distance myself and to find the path I was to take. And so, after breaking off the hunger strike, I applied to be transferred to normal prison in Frankfurt. In 1975, when I had been in such a bad way after ending the long hunger strike, and then once again in 1976, the prison directorate had offered me, on both occasions, a transfer to the Frankfurt prison, with the idea of "bringing together the family", as my parents lived in Bonn, and Frankfurt was the nearest women's prison. At that time, I had refused even to talk about it, but now I saw it as an opportunity. The other RAF prisoners regarded my decision once again as political treachery. Inga tried to talk to me about it, but I didn't want to argue with them any more. There wasn't any time left for talk anyway - three days after the end of the strike, on 5 September 1977, the Siegfried Hausner Commando Unit kidnapped the President of the Confederation of German Employers' Associations, Hanns-Martin Schleyer. While seizing him, the command unit shot and killed three policemen and his chauffeur. In exchange for Schleyer's release, the unit demanded the Release of eleven prisoners from the RAF.

Federal Chancellor Helmut Schmidt reacted to this operation by forming a "small emergency task force" which assumed all decision-making power until Schleyer's death. A state of emergency existed; it was war. One and a half years later, Schmidt made the following statement: "I wish to thank the German jurists that they haven't examined all of that under constitutional law." For the first time in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany, a gagging order was imposed on the entire press, who were only allowed to print official statements. And so, every opportunity for checks by the public was strangled.

At the same time, a witch hunt of previously unknown dimensions started against all of those on the Left, in order to force them into submission in this state that had called a state of emergency and to force them to distance themselves from the guerrilla. Many yielded under the pressure. The emergency task force and the press debated about reintroducing the death penalty or of threatening to shoot political prisoners and then carry this through, for example, to force Schleyer's release.

All contact to the outside and on the inside was cut off for us prisoners. Without any legal basis, a contact ban was enforced for all of the approximately one hundred prisoners who had been imprisoned in connection with paragraph 129. This applied just as much to the prisoners from other guerrilla groups as it did to those from the RAF; it applied equally to prisoners who had separated from their groups and to those who continued to support the armed struggle. The ban on contact meant that we were no longer allowed recreation, they took away our radios, we were no longer allowed to have newspapers or to receive letters, we were no longer allowed to see our lawyers or any other visitors. We were totally isolated. Nothing from the outside world made its way through to us any more and nobody on the outside heard anything about us. This created space for the state to do whatever it wanted.

It was BKA Chief Herold's hour of glory. Acting against the judgment of Federal Judges and Federal Public Prosecutors, he imposed a ban on visits by defence lawyers with the help of the government and the judicial authorities of the federal states. In this way, the grotesque situation came into being whereby lawyers who had been given the explicit consent of the judge and backed up by the Federal Prosecutors Office waited on their clients in the visiting cells, while the prison directorate refused to bring the prisoners to them. The BKA got its way by referring to the "supralegal state of emergency". The parliament followed suit: within three days, the law on the contact ban was pushed through and passed at high speed, legalising the longest ever contact ban that had ever been implemented. The so-called "cell control", which referred to the allegation that the imprisoned RAF members were controlling and organising political operations from their cells, was used to justify this law. Six months later, Minister of Justice Vogel, when asked on Italian television whether the Schleyer kidnapping had been planned and controlled from within the prison cells, answered: "No.

We didn't even assume that at the time and there was nothing to confirm that that could have been the case." The emergency task force made us prisoners hostages of the state, something that is common in military dictatorships.

I was dealt with in the same way as all of the political prisoners. Almost all of my personal belongings had been taken from me, my notes, books, writing materials, clothes, the radio, archived materials. I was allowed to keep a few books. I was given lined sheets of prison paper that had been counted, a prison pen, prison overalls and prison underwear. There was no music any more. Although there was almost nothing left in my cell, it was still searched on a daily basis either while I was in the yard alone or in my presence. At least once a week, I was taken into an empty cell, where I had to strip naked in front of two female warders and change my clothes. The few possessions I had were packed in a shoe box and then I was moved to a new empty cell. After four or five days, the same procedure. On several occasions, a whole troop of BKA officers turned up to search and check everything.

For hours on end, I stood on my chair at the barred window and looked at the prison walls. Sometimes I dreamed about being a very normal woman with a very normal profession. I wanted to get away from this never-ending pressure. I had now been in prison for almost five years, with one shitty year on the outside in-between. The confrontation, both internally and externally, had been getting steadily worse and I was less and less able to bear it. I wanted the eleven prisoners to be released, but I had also become an onlooker. And, once again, it was the state apparatus that had brought me to this point. Why had a ban on contact been imposed on me? I was a hostage of the state. For them, it was never about people. They only cared about their own power – either collaboration or revenge or steamrolling people. The pressure was enormous. It was only very seldom that one of the social prisoners dared to shout to us the news from the radio, and the warders immediately foiled such attempts. My nerves were stretched to breaking point. It was a situation in which anything could happen.

On 30 September the lawyer Arndt Mueller was arrested. The reason for issuing an arrest warrant against him was that he had worked in the same office as the lawyer Klaus Croissant, who was arrested at the same time in Paris, and Armin Newerla, who had already been arrested on 30 August; and that sympathisers who had now gone underground had frequented their office. Mueller and Newerla were therefore arrested for political reasons and before the death of the Stammheim prisoners. They were later sentenced to four years and eight months and three years and six months imprisonment respectively, because they had allegedly smuggled weapons into the high security wing in Stammheim, with which the prisoners had killed themselves.

On 13 October 1977, a Palestinian Commando Unit hijacked the German passenger plane 'Landshut' on its way from Majorca to West Germany. With this hijacking, the commando unit demanded the Release of eleven prisoners and, in addition, the Release of Palestinian prisoners in Turkey and Israel.

After the intervention of American President Carter in Somalia, on 18 October in the early hours of the morning and with the help of British counterinsurgency experts, a German GSG-9[16] unit stormed the plane and killed the entire Palestinian commando unit with the exception of Souhaila Andrawes, who survived seriously injured.

A few hours later, Andreas Baader and Jan-Carl Raspe were found dead in their cell from gunshot wounds, Gudrun Ensslin was found hanged, and Irmgard Moeller was found seriously injured by four stab wounds from a blunt prison knife. The propaganda machine delivered its verdict immediately: suicide. The prisoners had been desperate and had brought about their own justified end.

I heard about what had happened in the morning when the prison director opened the door to my cell, accompanied by a BKA officer. "The prisoners Baader, Ensslin, Raspe and Moeller have committed suicide in Stammheim. The BKA has therefore ordered that all prisoners currently subject to the contact ban be placed under special observation to prevent further suicides." And so, they once again opened the flap in my cell door, through which they could observe me round the clock.

I got up on to the chair at the barred window and looked at the prison walls. There was nothing in me but a deep and infinite sadness. Things had gone on too long to end well. But suicide? No, certainly not that. The government had created all the conditions it needed to be able to act. The small emergency task force had all the means at its disposal and had made use of these. And now the pressure was being intensified on those who weren't dead by keeping them under constant observation. They hoped that one of us would commit suicide because they couldn't stand it any longer.

Did this mean the end of the attempt to put into practice the concept of the urban guerrilla in the Federal Republic of Germany? What was to happen now? I had separated myself and made the decision to go my own way beforehand. The developments in the past weeks had done nothing to change that. However, they had once again clearly shown that I wanted to have nothing to do with the state apparatus. I wouldn't make peace with the state, even if I were no longer able to fight. I also had some doubt about the way the RAF operations were going. The guerrilla had sought a hardness in the confrontation which I could no longer follow.

When Schleyer was found dead in the boot of a car on 19 October 1977, it didn't surprise me. What other option could there have been in this situation? To release him after the storming of the aeroplane in Mogadishu and the death of the RAF members in

Stammheim? Would that not have made the state victory absolute? What kind of person had Schleyer been? Did his history no longer exist, his responsibility for the continuation of the politics that never counted the countless dead? However, his death also didn't make any sense.

On 12 November, Ingrid Schubert was found dead in her cell in the Bavarian Stadelheim prison. When the Stammheim group, of which she was also a member, had been torn apart in August, they had brought her to Stadelheim. She remained there in extreme isolation until her unexplained death. Had they finally managed to drive her to desperation and suicide? I had no answer.

After Schleyer was dead, the contact ban was formally lifted, but we prisoners were still kept in strict isolation. We therefore went on a short hunger strike at the end of November, which I participated in. I saw no other way of protesting against the actual extension of the contact ban. Like the others, I had to get out of there, even if I wanted ultimately to go somewhere else. This hunger strike caused days of cramps and unbearable headaches for me, and these have stayed with me until today as a physical reaction to exhaustion and starvation.

At the beginning of 1978, I was transferred to normal imprisonment at Frankfurt-Preungesheim prison.

In normal prison

In Preungesheim, my cell door suddenly stood open. Next to me and in the three floors above me, other prisoners laughed, talked to one another or ranted or eyed me, the newcomer, nosily. I had to muster all my courage to leave my cell and expose myself to their looks and questions. After the years of isolation and the contact ban, being surrounded by so many people I didn't know scared me and made me shy. With a great deal of effort and the help of the other women, I learned how to open up towards other people again, to laugh again, to stop sounding like a telegram when I spoke and express myself in a way that was understandable for others.

I began to work. In a large hall with simple machines, thirty women glued together plastic bags and folded cardboard boxes. The humdrum, monotonous gluing of plastic bags was a relief for me in the first weeks. After the years alone in my cell, I was able to move around in a large hall. There were always discussions going on within the work units of three women and between the different groups. In the evenings, I was totally exhausted from the unaccustomed work and from working together with other people. I gradually got to know the world of the women in prison. Their stories, their strategies for survival. It was a special world with its own language and its own rules of conduct.

I quickly struck up a good relationship with a few prisoners who had been convicted for heroin-related crimes. Hardly any of them were politically aware, but we understood each other in our rejection of the "normal" values in society. They had mostly started using heroin out of a sense of desperation because they couldn't find a way in life and didn't want to live the one expected of them. They came from different family backgrounds, their fathers being either blue-collar workers or salaried employees; many of them had left school without any qualifications, others had finished a traineeship. No matter what the differences between them were, they were all especially astute, when they weren't using H. In those times, they had a clear picture of the oppression and exploitation and they rebelled against them. They accepted me as one of them and wanted me to discuss the articles they wrote in the prison newspaper with them.

Christine was a qualified medical assistant, small, thin, liked to wear bright clothes that got her noticed, and applied her make-up carefully. This made her different from Ingrid and the other ex-junkies who mostly didn't care what they looked like. She liked looking after her appearance, but it was never so important to her that she couldn't give everything away from one minute to the next. She was generous and it made her happy when she could share a bar of chocolate with Ingrid and me, or a homemade cake from the birthday parcel her mother had sent her.

Ingrid didn't get parcels from anyone. She had been shooting up since she was thirteen, just like her sister who lay on another floor in Preungesheim with an acute cirrhosis of the liver. She didn't have any school qualification and yet, now, to her own surprise, she all of a sudden loved searching through newspapers and books with us to find some piece of information, or to read stories and even write articles for the prison newspaper.

With Ingrid and Christine, I rediscovered forgotten needs; eating something delicious; a piece of soap that smelled good; cream for my skin, which was always dry and tore easily; listening to music together.

One day, we were sitting in the common room when I had been at Preungesheim for about six weeks. I noticed that one of the women was watching me silently. She was almost as big as I was, young, and from the "ghetto", which is what she called the post-war temporary housing estate where she had grown up. Through her relationships with GIs who were stationed at the military camp just near where she lived, she had come into contact with drugs and become an addict. After some time, she said to me, shocked, "I didn't know who you were, but I liked you from the very beginning, and I liked everything about you I saw after that. About half an hour ago, somebody told me why you are in prison, that you're one of the terrorists. That's when I suddenly realised what was going on in my head. Before I got to know you, I always wanted to hang people like you. I totally hated you and I thought you were the worst and the most evil murderers. I only knew about you all from the *Bild* newspaper and the television. I didn't actually know any of you. To me, you were pigs, the worst kind of criminals. Now, I feel sick when I think that I wanted to hang you, that I really hated you all. I could cry, because of it."

For the first time in more than five years, I had access to the "cinema". At irregular intervals, we were shown a film that the social workers had picked out. A screen was hung up on the wall of the largest room, which was used as a church on Sundays. One day, we sat, pressed closely together on rows of chairs; Ingrid and Christine were next to me. The film began. It was *State of Siege* by Peter Lilienthal. The images got a hold of me and didn't let go again. The film was about the struggle of the Tupamaros in Uruguay. The operations of the urban guerrilla, repression by the military and the police. The kidnapping of the CIA agent Mitrione by the Tupamaros, his stay in a "people's prison". I couldn't believe that I was able to see a film like that in prison. It suddenly stirred memories in me that had been buried by prison. I noticed that the world outside and especially the time before my arrest hardly existed any more in my conscious mind. Also forgotten was that feeling of taking the bull by the horns in order to force it to its knees, which had also existed before.

Christine had already seen the film before. In the mid-seventies, she had also taken part in discussions with the Left and in the squatters' battles until she discovered heroin. She also remembered those times now and told us some stories from that time in her life.

And I fell in love. In the years in isolation, I had forgotten what it was to fall in love. It took me completely by surprise and dragged me into a whirlwind of emotions.

Karin was older than I, always on the go, enigmatic, full of stories and she had been lesbian all of her life. She came from another world previously unknown to me, from the world of "sub"-lesbians, in which lesbian women who felt discriminated against in society had created their own subculture.

In prison, many women begin to develop sexual relationships with other women. Under the pressure created by the loss of all other relationships and the loneliness, women in prison search for the only alternative possibility - a relationship with a fellow prisoner. A strange set of double standards emerges, a life in two worlds that exist directly alongside one another. These women have the same ideas about moral standards as the world on the outside; they completely reject lesbian relationships and despise all prisoners who are actually lesbian and who therefore also love women even when outside of prison. At the same time, they have sexual relations with other prisoners which they do not see as lesbian relationships, but as a substitute for relationships with men. The substitute relationship is also kept secret and, although everybody knows about it, nobody talks about it.

I only really became aware of these double standards when my feelings for Karin got stronger. I felt the threat that this discrimination implied. Up until then, I had experienced what it was like to be discriminated against because of my political conviction. Now I discovered that the contempt of society that is aimed not at a way of thinking, but at a way of being, hits much deeper and threatens your existence and your understanding of yourself as a human being. I had to consciously fight not to give in to my fear of this threat, not to give in when faced with contempt, but to openly stick by my feelings. At the same time, Karin told me about her life, from how hard society's discrimination was in the sixties against gays and lesbians and how she had tried to survive in the face of it. Her reaction to this contempt was to reject all heterosexual relationships and she had come to be angry with all men. This was something I could understand and, because of my experience of feeling threatened in prison and my feelings for Karin, I decided to show my solidarity with all lesbian women, to stand up for this and – anything else would have seemed like treachery to me – not to have any more relationships with men.

Karin had cancer. She had been operated on a year before, but the tumour in her uterus could not be removed completely and she was supposed to have another operation within six months. However, by then, she was already in prison. Now the pain had started again and the fear she had suppressed returned in the form of panic. She had been sentenced to six months in prison because of tax fraud and had already served more than half of it. The normal judicial means for having the execution of a sentence suspended took for ever and would mean first of all filing an application to the judge in Munich where Karin had been sentenced, waiting for a response from the Public Prosecutor, then a decision by the Office for the Execution of Prison Sentences. Karin no longer left her cell; she had stopped eating and she cried all the time. The prison directorate could have acted, could have suspended the sentence and could have taken Karin to a hospital because her life was in danger, but nothing happened. I discussed what we could do with Christine, Ingrid and a small group of prisoners. We organised a petition demanding immediate parole, then went to the prison director with the list and said to her, "If Karin doesn't get out in the next few days, we will cause trouble in the prison!" I knew that the consequences for making a threat of this kind could be transfer to another prison and renewed isolation for me. However, this seemed unimportant in view of the possibility of rescuing Karin from certain death from cancer. The next day, she was taken to a hospital and operated on. She also didn't have to come back to prison. She visited me regularly right up until my release. The cancer never came back and I remained in normal prison in Preungesheim.

In April 1978, Verena Becker was transferred to Preungesheim. Since the official end of the contact ban, the terms and conditions of imprisonment for most of the political prisoners had remained unchanged, which meant that they were almost identical to the conditions when the contact ban was in force. For this reason, the prisoners from the RAF had begun a new hunger strike which ended with the prison authorities reintroducing their usual method of applying different terms and conditions of imprisonment. Some prisoners remained in total isolation, while others were put together in very small groups. Verena was transferred to Frankfurt into normal prison.

To make sure that we had as little contact with one another as possible, I was given painters' overalls, a brush and paint, and was to paint cells, while Verena had to glue the plastic bags. Her cell was in the same wing as mine, one floor above me. As there weren't any walls between the floors, but only waist-high grate balustrades and lattice doors to the stairs that were mostly open, there wasn't much to get in the way of our contact. Besides, we had our daily exercise in the yard together.

However, Verena didn't want to have any contact with me. She made clear to the other prisoners that there was a distance and a difference between us. For Verena, as for the other remaining prisoners from the RAF, I was someone who had turned around politically who didn't want to fight any more, someone who could no longer be trusted or relied on.

It was absolutely clear to me that the others thought about me in this way, however, I was still happy when I heard that Verena was to be transferred to Preungesheim and her reaction hurt me. However, I gritted my teeth and realised that it was maybe better that way. I now no longer had to struggle with the temptation to do something that wasn't my own idea out of solidarity, or because she expected it of me or because I didn't want a confrontation with her. Verena's rejection made it more difficult, but that was also what I had been looking for when I applied for normal prison, namely, to make new decisions about every step of the way only according to the way I saw things and according to my own will. And I really had come closer to achieving this. It became clear that, in certain situations, we thought the same, that we acted the same way with regard to certain problems and that we got on well with the same prisoners. It became clear that my decision to separate from the group didn't mean that I had chosen the most comfortable path without struggle and that I wasn't looking to fit in, but that a desire for redefinition had arisen from my doubts about myself.

During all the years I was in prison, my mother had never stopped writing to me and, at some point, this convinced me that, in her way, she loved me and that she never stopped looking for me. My father, by comparison, had never made one single attempt. He was incapable of taking a single step in my direction, although he also loved me in his way. In Preungesheim I was no longer subject to the tremendous pressure from the authorities, as had been the case in isolation, and so I was able to make the decision to accept visits from my family. Previously, the visits took place in a special cell where the visitor sat at one end of a long table, while an officer from the BKA sat at the other end and wrote everything down, and at least one warden skulked behind me. Now I, like all the other prisoners, was able to receive visitors in the large hall, where many prisoners and visitors sat and talked at many small tables, eating things the visitors had brought with them. The room was full of noises. There was only one warder who stood in the doorway watching the over the hall and it was possible to really talk to one another under these conditions.

We had all learned our lesson. After all of the attempts at contact that I had broken off, my parents knew that they could not interfere in my decisions and they no longer tried to do so. My mother even called up newspapers to complain when the term isolation torture was printed in inverted commas, telling them it actually was torture by isolation. When I told her that I was in love with a woman, she wrote to me that she could understand me well, because the same had happened to her once. However, she had then decided for my father and a family. I respected her very much for this openness, because I knew how much something like that was despised in her environment. She was the only member of my family with whom I was able to rebuild a close relationship. She died one year after my release from prison.

In the meantime, my brother Dieter had joined an Indian sect. When the student movement came to an end, various religious groups from Asia had come to Europe and North America. Many of those who had lost their orientation, or very young people who didn't want to take part in the capitalist world of competition and consumption, ran to sects like these. They were attracted by the idea of a life in paradise that was preached by the sect leaders and by the promise of a chance to escape from the unbearable pressure of a highly competitive society. These sects mostly had an authoritarian-patriarchal structure and the main interest of the "gurus" was financial exploitation of their followers. And so, after I was released, Dieter had half a million Marks in debt, money that he had donated to the sect. In the first year, he did up to eight hours of transcendental meditation a day. This wore him out so much that my parents didn't even recognise him on the street. His face had changed completely. In the course of time, he became brutal person and greedy for money, and I broke off all contact with him. He remained in the sect until, ten years later, he drove into a tree and died.

The longer I spent in normal prison, the more I started to get back my self-awareness and therefore I became increasingly aware of the effects normal prison had on me. I was continuously involved in the day-to-day problems of the prisoners, and one prisoner or another was always coming to me with her problems, or somewhere, one of them was flipping out because she couldn't stand things any more and we had to help her get back on her feet. There were arguments, confrontations with the warders and the prison administration. I had hardly any time at all to read the newspaper. Studying a difficult book had become totally impossible.

Christine and Ingrid, the prisoners I mostly hung around with, were released. Shortly after that both of them returned to the needle. New prisoners came, things were constantly in flux.

How it would my release be? My sentence was due to end in autumn 1979. Would they really let me out? How could I be sure that they wouldn't start new proceedings against me as they had done with Irmgard Moeller and Bernhard Braun? At the end of her sentence, Irmgard had been transferred to Stammheim and the new criminal proceedings that were instigated against her ended with her being given a life sentence. I was now going my own particular way, but that did not mean that I was in any way safe from the same kind of arbitrariness. Bernhard, for example, had long separated from the group when they confronted him with new charges on the day of his release. What I had experienced in Luebeck had taught me to be alert and to be prepared for the worst from the Office for State Security.

And if they really did release me – what could I do then?

I tried to imagine my life on the outside. I didn't want to distance myself from politics and I didn't want to denounce anyone. I didn't want to take part in the armed struggle any more, but I also didn't want to accept things the way they were. After what I had experienced in prison since 1971, I saw myself in a kind of trap which offered me only two options: on the one side to become numb to everything or to denounce, both of which were the same to me; or, on the other side, to attack the state head on, which meant continuing to work with the guerrilla. I wanted neither.

I spoke to Verena about my fears and thoughts in this respect, as well as to Monika, the social worker who was responsible for me. At the beginning I hadn't trusted her - I mean, a social worker in prison had to be dodgy. However, I had observed her work with the other prisoners in our section and had learned to respect her. She had supported us in our demands to have Karin released and in other conflicts with the prison directorate. She was younger than me and likeable. She suggested that I file an application for early release after having served two-thirds of my sentence. This was usual practice for all other prisoners, but not for those from the RAF. We had always rejected this option, because its success depended on a favourable social prognosis, which in our case meant renunciation. Should I get into that? What could I say without denouncing my comrades? And what did I even want to do after that? Monika brought me several brochures about projects in countries of the Third World after I had decided not to stay in Germany. I wanted to go to Africa, to Guinea Bissau, Mozambique or Africa. However, the situation there had not improved after the liberation from Portuguese colonial rule. After 500 years of plundering, the Portuguese had left behind countries that were lacking in every form of infrastructure. There were a few military barracks and military airports, but no schools, no universities, no roads, no jobs, no doctors. The interest of the large corporations and the governments of the countries in the raw materials there hadn't decreased. Armed groups were fighting against the governments of Mozambique and Angola with the support of the USA or South Africa. The tribal differences that had been exploited by the Portuguese were still being stirred up. The war had not stopped, and nor had hunger, misery and despair. I couldn't go there.

Monika knew of a development project in Tanzania. However, to work there, I would have to have been able to do something practical, otherwise what was the point of going to such a country? I decided to learn carpentry and study architecture. Monika got in touch with a Professor at Frankfurt University who specialised in architecture in tropical countries of the Third World and he came to see me in prison.

Finally, I filed the standard application for early release after serving two-thirds of my sentence. At my hearing before the Office for the Execution of Prison Sentences at the end of Autumn 1978, I declared that I personally would no longer go to the guerrilla, but I refused to make any political statement whatsoever concerning the politics of the guerrilla.

At the beginning of November we were given reinforcements: Helga, Rosi, Ingrid and Simone, together with others, had occupied the Frankfurt offices of the German Press Agency (dpa), in order to draw attention to the life-threatening situation of Werner Hoppe and Karl-Heinz Dellwo. Werner, with whom I had had such an intense correspondence during my initial period in prison weighed a mere 44 kg after seven years in isolation and was no longer able to keep food down. He lay in hospital in Hamburg and, according to doctors, he was unable to remain in prison for medical reasons, and yet they refused to release him. Despite the many attempts of his lawyers and his family to publish something about this situation, the press remained silent. Since Schleyer's death, the situation of the political prisoners and the terms and conditions of their imprisonment had been completely hushed up. Karl-Heinz, one of the members of the commando unit that had occupied the Embassy in Stockholm, had been on hunger and thirst strike for six weeks to protest against the victimisation and the isolation practices.

The four women came to the remand prisoners' wing and remained isolated there. However, they showered together with the other prisoners and shopped with them and Verena and I could see them. There were now six of us political prisoners in the midst of the social prisoners. Everywhere, heavy discussions took place, no longer this oppressive stillness that comes from powerlessness. The reaction was increased controls and repression. Where it hadn't been a problem beforehand to climb from one section to the next, even though not allowed, now doors with bars on them were installed between the sections. The prison newspaper got into trouble and articles were censored or banned. The prison directorate wanted to dictate what appeared in it, something which had slipped out of their hands. Finally, the newspaper was abolished. We organised discussions and meetings to vote in a prison council, which was provided for in the prison regulations, but had always been appointed by the prison directorate up until then.

There was a new prison director, Kuhlenkampf, a smart young guy direct from the Ministry.

My application for early release, which had been accepted by the Office for the Execution of Prison Sentences, was rejected by the Higher Regional Court of Appeal. The reason? There was no evidence of active remorse.

Things really heated up in the women's prison when Guenter Sonnenberg protested against his separation from two other political prisoners and against his transfer from Stammheim to Bruchsal by going on hunger strike. The remaining prisoners from the RAF had joined this strike. When he was arrested in May 1977, Guenter had been seriously injured by a gunshot wound to the head and he had suffered from amnesia since then. He had lost his word memory and he could no longer read or write, and could hardly talk. From the very beginning, he had been medically unfit for confinement, but they still put him into total isolation. With an amazing effort of will, he began to recover his memory. After a year, he was allowed to exercise in the yard with two prisoners from the RAF, which had now been retracted due to his transfer.

Guenter had been arrested together with Verena and she was able to tell us more about him. Many of the women in prison were disgusted at how the judiciary and the Office for State Security could victimise Guenter and place him in isolation despite his head injury. We discussed whether we wanted to join in the hunger strike. There were several social prisoners who would have loved to start right away. However, Verena and the women who had occupied the dpa offices first of all wanted to talk about the consequences of a hunger strike for each of those involved. At the end of February 1979, the four "dpa women" joined the strike. When they were isolated because of this, we organised a petition. Sixty prisoners protested against locking up the four and some women, Verena and I among them, went on hunger strike. The strike escalated in March with a short thirst strike and more prisoners joined us. At this point, the Ministry of Justice gave its consent to retransfer Guenter back with the other two RAF prisoners.

The prison directorate reacted with threats: stricter controls, cancelling prison leave and other "favours", locking prisoners in their cells, exercise in the yard alone. This pressure polarised the prisoners: some of them got scared and joined sides with the prison directorate. They began to fuel hatred against us because we "agitated" the other prisoners "using them for our own interests". The rest of the women fought with us together for our rights and our dignity. A sense of solidarity, closeness and strength developed among us, something that was completely unknown to most of them. They discovered that it can be fun to fight together.

On one Wednesday at the beginning of April, Helga, Rosi, Ingrid and Simone were beaten up by a bunch of heavies from among the wardens in the women's prison as they were on their way back from trial concerning the dpa occupation. The warders beat Rosi so badly that her hyoid bone was broken. This act of the commando raid did not take place in the building where the cells were, but the rest of us found about it immediately and we saw that the wing above the administration was being cleared out in great haste, obviously with the aim of isolating the four women there. It was in the early afternoon. We gathered at the platform, on the small "square" at the place where the four wings of the building met below the control centre, which is what we called the glass box at the height of the first floor, from where the warders supervised the four wings. What could we do to protest against the use of physical violence and the transfer of the four women to the isolation station? A small group of prisoners, Verena and I among them, remained on the platform to inform all of the women. Every one of them who came from work, from trial or from a visit had to go by the platform. Our group became gradually bigger. The small metal food trolleys rolled through the sections and the warders called out, "Grub's up! Anybody not in their cell won't be getting any food!" We didn't care and we stayed on the platform. On the orders of the head warder, the doors to the sections were closed. We couldn't get in any more and the prisoners in their sections couldn't get to us.

The security inspector appeared, threatening, "If you do not go to your cells immediately, we will instigate proceedings against you for agitation and mutiny. Then not only can you forget your early release, you will be facing an additional sentence! I demand that you get down from the platform immediately!" He stood there, broad and confident that we would give in under his threats. However, only very few women decided to go back to their cells. The rest of us, maybe fifteen or twenty prisoners, pulled together. It was evening by now and they had locked in all of the women early. Some of them banged against their doors in solidarity. All of a sudden we heard one of them cry, "The pigs! The pigs are outside!" So, the prison directorate had called in the heavies. And at that very moment, the doors to the administrative section and to the yard opened and the warders were pushing their way through. Many of the prisoners now started banging against their doors and the whole prison reverberated with the noise. We asked to be able to talk among ourselves and we decided to go back to our cells and yield to the superior numbers of the warders. We were *chaperoned* back to our cells by the warders. For hours after, we hammered against the wooden doors with such fury that the warders ran up and down the corridors nervously, because they were afraid we could beat the doors down. One door did actually break apart. It was pandemonium.

Finally, we managed to prevent Helga, Ingrid, Rosi and Simone from being transferred to the vacated wing.

Since I had arrived at the Preungesheim prison, I had repeatedly witnessed how a few individual prisoners made it possible to smuggle drugs inside despite the thousands of controls. However, after we had begun to organise ourselves, when solidarity had been created among us women, there were suddenly huge amounts of drugs going around and nobody knew where they were coming from. A large number of the women we were friends with were former junkies. Now that they were being offered heroin so easily, many of them couldn't resist and this part of our solidarity broke away. The prisoners who began to shoot up again simultaneously fell back into their old structures of loneliness, egoism, suspicion and denunciation. It was terrible to see how people changed from one day to the next because of the drugs. However, we were almost completely powerless against it. Under these difficult conditions, the drug was stronger than we were.

One month after the trouble, on 11 May 1979, I was released. The appeal against the objection of the Higher Regional Court of Appeal had been successful and I was released on parole a few months before the end of my sentence.

I moved in with my friend Karin. It very quickly became clear that I didn't need to go to Africa and that I had many options.

I was 31 years old and I had spent seventy-five months in various prisons since 1971 for forging passports, for possessing weapons that had never been used, but, first and foremost, for supporting and being a member of the RAF.

And now I was starting once again "from the beginning".

Notes

1. *Kinderladen* are 'alternative' Kindergartens which emerged from the student movement in the late sixties, mainly in Berlin. The *Kinderladen* were and are self-organised and run independently, often set up on the initiative of parents. They originally pursued an anti-authoritarian pedagogical style which has been revised to some extent since then. Seen as an alternative to state-run and church-affiliated Kindergartens.
2. *Bild* is a newspaper that is tabloid in content, but broadsheet in format. It is published by the right-of-centre Axel Springer publishing group and is comparable to the *Sun* in Great Britain. It played a central role in this publishing house's war of propaganda against the RAF and the Left in general.
3. Anybody resident in Germany has to register her/his place of residence at the Residents' Registration Office (*Einwohnermeldeamt*). This address is then entered in a person's ID card, if a person has German nationality. Non-German residents must also register, but the procedure is slightly different. Anybody not registered, or registered at a false address, is already breaking the law and may be prosecuted.
4. If a person has a second place of residence, this must be registered as such with the Residents' Registration Office.
5. Police officers carry guns at all times in Germany when on duty.
6. 'Throw your kidney stones at the banks'. A slogan from the Socialist Patients' Collective which saw the main causes of illness and mental illness in society and urged patients to turn their illness, in whatever form, against society.
7. The *Tagesschau* is the main daily news programme broadcast on public television in Germany.
8. *Bundesgerichtsghof*. The Federal Court of Justice is the highest court in the Federal Republic of Germany and plays a role not unlike that of the Supreme Court in the USA.
9. Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry of Justice of North-Rhine Westphalia. Germany has a federal system of government which means that many matters come under the jurisdiction of the courts of the individual federal states.

10. *Stern* is a popular weekly magazine, comparable to *Newsweek* or *Time* Magazine in the USA. It has libertarian-critical, to some extent left-libertarian politics, but also publishes views and articles by authors from across the mainstream political spectrum.
11. West German Bundeswehr – the Army of the Federal Republic of Germany.
12. Joschka Fischer – well-known German left-wing activist from the sixties who became German Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor in the government of Gerhard Schroeder from 1998 to 2005. He was a leading figure in the Green Party.
13. Opel company group – a group of left-wing activists and intellectuals who worked in the Opel car factory to establish links to ordinary workers. Christian Democratic.
14. *Konspirative wohnung*: these were apartments kept under false names by members or supporters of various left-wing groups in Germany for the purposes of housing people who were living underground or who were on the run.
15. Christian Democratic Union (CDU), Germany's largest conservative political party.
16. GSG 9 – the abbreviation refers to the German Border Guard Group 9 the special operations unit within the German Federal Police which is responsible for countering terrorism.

Epilogue

When I was released from prison in 1979, I joined up with some other people and began to organise solidarity for the political prisoners. Visits to the prisoners were largely forbidden and there was hardly any public debate about the terms and conditions of their imprisonment.

Together with other women, I set up an anti-imperialistic women's group and, in the years that followed, actively took part in various debates and played an active role in different groups.

In August 1985, I went to Cuba because they were threatening to arrest me for the third time. The use of preventive detention had already been announced on television, so I applied for and was granted political asylum in Cuba.

It was there that I thought about putting my story to paper.

In prison, we had already discussed the fact that there would have to be autobiographies about our history one day, and not only documentary reports with their political declarations or more or less "objective" analyses of the situation and the conflicts in society. But who would write them? The prisoners were unable to as the conditions in isolation made this impossible. In addition, our cells were constantly being raided and all of our documents stolen.

In the years from 1979 to 1985, I saw that many of the young people who had become political, especially through the anti-NATO movement in 1980, knew nothing of the seventies, nothing about the student movement and nothing about our experiences in prison and the severity of our conflict with the state. I was always being asked about it and they wanted me to tell them what it was like.

In Cuba, I started to think that I should write down at least part of the history of the RAF. At first, I found it difficult. I was just getting used to life in Cuba, was learning Spanish and, in 1988, my twins were born, meaning that all of my energy was spent looking after them.

It was 1991 when I finally began to write and it was a hard battle dealing with my memories. I had hardly spoken to anyone in the past fifteen to twenty years about what had happened. I hadn't spoken about it in Germany, because there we talked about the purposes of the state and not about what we had been subjected to in it. I hadn't spoken about it in Cuba, because the Cuban government had made not talking about it a condition. I was also not supposed to talk about the fact that I had been granted asylum and the Cubans whom I trusted couldn't imagine what it meant in Europe, where people have everything, to take up the struggle for a revolution and to have been in prison as a result. It took me more than half a year to manage one hundred pages.

When I gave my text to a few German friends to read, they thought that most of it was not possible, arguing, "It can't have been like that!", or saying "Politically, it's the wrong time", or "You can't write it like that." As I was unsure myself, I reacted by locking the manuscript in a drawer.

I thought I could try living in Germany again and wanted to return there with my family in 1992. However, I received information that the people from the Office for the Protection of the Constitution would be waiting at the airport in Berlin on the day of my planned arrival, and the news about the attacks on refugees in Rostock and the treatment of the prisoners dissuaded me to even try, so we moved to Uruguay in 1993.

There, I began discussing my project with Tupamaros who had been in prison and tried once again to talk to comrades in Germany about our history. However, I received no replies at all and, after mulling over what to do, I sat down again with my old manuscript.

While I was writing, I wasn't sure whether the young people of today would understand me. The German I spoke and wrote was that of the year 1985, and not only my language, but also my way of thinking, were characteristic of that time. Until 2000, the year after this book was published, I hadn't been to Europe at all. One interview that I read in the *taz* newspaper gave me food for thought. In the article, four young women were asked about their opinion of Ulrike Meinhof and the RAF. One of them answered, "These RAF women were pretty strange. On the one hand they reckoned they were really emancipated and, on the other hand, they were so dependent on men that they couldn't free Andreas Baader with a group of women, but needed the help of a man." Her criticism was based on the fact that the women who freed Andreas in 1970 had decided at the last minute to bring a man into the armed commando unit, because they feared that the men guarding Andreas Baader would not take them seriously and that they would therefore be forced to shoot merely for that reason.

Then, in the year 2000, I met some young people on my first journey back to Germany who, even though they spoke another language, were nevertheless curious and were not put off by the fact that we talked differently. Once again, I was able to learn something.

On my trip to Germany in 2000, I came across an old phenomenon: I was besieged by the press who wanted me to make a clear statement that I was against violence. However, these very same journalists justified the Gulf War (still without German soldiers at the front) and the attack on Yugoslavia (the first time since 1945 that German soldiers were deployed). Their argument was that these wars were necessary. In the Germany of 2001, the German Foreign Minister Fischer was expected to show remorse and resign, because he had eaten breakfast with me 30 years before while, at the same time, he was acclaimed for giving the order to carry out a war of aggression against Yugoslavia resulting in the deaths of thousands of civilians. Enormous pressure is exerted on those who once set their hopes on revolution to validate the specifically German dogma that the state is always in the right. Many yielded and still yield. What remains is the idea that each of us should look after number one, with the result that we will be paying for the air we breathe if the transnational pharmaceutical companies continue what they have been doing up to now.

It remains to say that the years in isolation changed and damaged me. In 1980, one year after being released from prison, I had to have an operation on my thyroid gland, because the constant tension had caused a lump to form there. A skin doctor diagnosed damage to my skin which would usually be expected in a person at least fifteen years older than I. My metabolism changed so dramatically in prison that, since then, I only need to eat very little to get by. My body has reacted to the time I spent in the Dead Wing with high blood pressure, which caused the death of my first baby two weeks before the birth. Since my release from prison, I have dizzy attacks even at very low heights, something that I did not suffer from before. Being in isolation and, in particular, the Dead Wing damaged my memory and, once in freedom, I had to systematically start retraining my short-term memory. I succeeded in this, but I have been unable to regain my memory for numbers and my abilities in arithmetic, which were very good before going to prison.

These experiences have changed me and I am still trying to understand them; they are perhaps the reason why I like my life now and why I live it more intensely than ever.

At the end of 2002, my book appeared in Spanish. The reaction to its publication in Montevideo showed me that I had written it primarily for my Uruguayan friends. I lived with them and they were in my thoughts when I was searching for the right words.

Nearly all of them had been in prison for many years, had often lived in exile and almost all of them had children who were the same age as my twins. The female ex-prisoners wanted to see a collective work about their history with a collective result. Conflicts within the group were not spoken about, not even more than ten years after their release from prison. This meant that my work was given a historical dimension that gave me strength and self-confidence. In Germany there were only a few of us, in Uruguay more than a thousand. Germany had the isolation practices, in Uruguay there were large groups of women imprisoned in one single prison camp, while the men were placed in isolation in one large prison. In Germany, the ex-prisoners lived in different cities and in different realities after their release. In Uruguay, the prisoners kept in touch with each other even after their release and they also experienced similar realities. And yet despite all this, the questions, problems, thoughts and practices were very similar at their core, both here and there. Realising this helped me write.

When my Uruguayan friends read my book, they were very astonished that there could be so many common factors across the continents without there having been any personal exchange. The strategies of de-politicisation and of placing politics within the realm of psychiatry, both of them usual practice in Germany, are designed to wipe out exactly this historical dimension which extends far beyond Germany's borders and the powers that be have tried to make us out as a few people gone mad.

In 2003, I had to make the hard decision to return to Germany. The bank system in Uruguay had collapsed and the Dresdner Bank, Credit Suisse and Chase Manhattan had gone bankrupt in Montevideo. It was an amazing thing to watch. The government pumped Uruguayan state finances into the holes through which huge amounts of money had been drawn from the rest of Uruguay into the large cities.

A ruined country is what was left. Like many others, I no longer knew how I was going to feed my children. In the year 2002, 70,000 Uruguayans from a total population of 3 million emigrated. The exodus continues and, as always, it is the best qualified who go and who are granted access to the rich countries.

From the beginning, it was clear to me that I could only write about the time up to my second release from prison. Until 1979, I was alone most of the time, especially in prison, only briefly being part of a group, many of whom are no longer alive. After 1979, I participated in various groups in which intense debate took place between those involved and I do not think it would be right for me to recount this process alone.

Anyone who expected that my book would present and judge the theoretical foundations of the guerrilla will have to remain disappointed. That is not the story I have to tell nor one I want to tell. I went to the RAF without years of studying the theory of revolution and, nevertheless, the path I took was not by chance. There was and still is a continuity in my life which started back then – to always search for new ways to fight against injustice and not to shy away from the personal consequences. In this over-intellectualised Germany, many on the Left do not want to accept something which is celebrated by the people of the so-called Third World: that a person can take up the struggle without having analysed the world theoretically beforehand. And this struggle does not mean being blind, but rather is born of a political situation and is sustained by a living and lived political conviction. Not even a year lay between my first step towards a conscious search for political practice (the Release) and my arrest in 1971. I could not re-read political analyses from the sixties and seventies (as I did during my time in prison) in order to reconstruct a theoretical background for this book, theories that I hardly knew of at the time. This would have meant another eight years until the publication of this book. After a great many doubts about myself, I came to the conviction that it nevertheless makes sense to report what I experienced.

I have not written down my story to place it in a drawer and be finished with it, as if the story were at an end and the same questions and injustices no longer existed.

In order to move closer towards reality, there have to be many reports. I think we should be as open as possible about our experiences, otherwise the discussion about the RAF will remain stuck somewhere between mythology and psychological warfare. And with this, I am certainly not referring to the admissions of remorse and guilt that are loudly demanded by those who unabashedly give their support for the wars over the supplies of energy and raw materials and who strive for ideological supremacy while millions of people die. Today, those who are dying are mainly dying in Africa, Iraq, Afghanistan, and the numbers of dead are counted by the thousands and not in single figures. And those in power wash their hands, as if innocent.

Margrit Schiller
Berlin 2007

Glossary of organisations, terms and events

Al Fatah

The "Movement to Free Palestine" was founded in 1959 by Yasser Arafat and others. The Fatah's goal was to set up a Palestinian state and it fought against Israel. After the Six-Day War in 1967, the Fatah assumed the leadership of the PLO under Arafat. The political spectrum within the Fatah ranges from a majority civil-national current to radical, revolutionary elements.

Black Liberation Army

The BLA emerged in 1970 as a political and military organisation (militia) for the self-defence of residential districts that were predominantly African-American from racist attacks by the police and the Ku-Klux-Klan in the USA. It later saw itself as a national freedom movement in connection with other national freedom movements in America, Africa and Asia. The BLA built up clandestine structures and small autonomous cells.

Black Panthers

A radical organisation of African Americans in the USA founded in 1966 as part of the Black Power movement.

Contact Ban in Germany

An order issued by the regional ministers of justice from the federal states following the kidnapping of Hanns-Martin Schleyer in September 1977. It was put into force some days later (29 September) in accelerated proceedings by the Bundestag (German Parliament). The law forbade any contact whatsoever between the political prisoners, with their lawyers or with the outside world. This ban also applied to listening to the radio, reading newspapers and writing or receiving letters. In this way, the political prisoners were completely cut off and isolated from the outside world.

Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Frelimo)

Freedom movement and political party in Mozambique. From 1965, carried out a guerrilla war for the country's independence. After the revolution in Portugal, the Frelimo achieved independence and took over power.

German Communist Party (DKP)
Was founded on 25 September 1968 in Essen. Successor of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) which was banned by the Federal Constitutional Court in August 1956. The KPD, which was smashed by the Nazis and brutally repressed up until 1945, still had approx. 70,000 members at the time it was banned (its manifesto was regarded to be contrary to the "constitution based on the principles of democracy and liberty"). The DKP, which had approx. 45,000 members at its peak in the mid-seventies, tried to establish itself as a left-wing alternative to the SPD. It remained without any significant influence in the parliamentary area, never getting more than 1% of the vote.

Guerrilla
Comes from the Spanish word "guerra" (war) and came into use during the Spanish war of independence. Describes the "small war" of "irregular" units among the native population of a country against an occupying force. The guerrilla strategy played an important role in the decolonialisation struggles, also in Latin America, where guerrilla groups fought, to some extent successfully, against the ruling social and political conditions.

Irish Republican Army (IRA)
Founded in 1919, nationalist military organisation of the Northern Irish (Catholic) fight for freedom.

Mossad
Israeli secret service.

Movement 2 June
Founded in January 1972. The date in the name refers to the date on which the student Benno Ohnesorg was murdered by the policeman Kurras (1967). The organisation's roots lie in the student movement and the emerging left-wing counterculture at the end of the sixties. Its predecessors were the loosely organised, so-called "hash rebels" in Berlin surrounding, among others, Georg von Rauch, Ralf Reinders, Thomas Weisbecker and Michael "Bommi" Baumann, who were responsible from 1969 onwards for a serious of attacks. After a wave of arrests and the death of Georg von Rauch, who was shot by the police in 1971, the movement transformed

into a fixed organisation based in Berlin. The Movement 2 June, which was anti-authoritarian, saw itself as the "armed wing of the Left", unlike the RAF which saw itself as the "revolutionary avant-garde". The 2 June's goal was to confront the omnipotence of the state with a countervailing power which was firmly established within a radical and militant Left. The Office for the Protection of the Constitution had an informer in the Movement 2 June, Ulrich Schmücker, who was murdered on 5 June 1974 after being exposed.

On 9 November 1974, Berlin's most senior judge, Günter von Drenkmann, was shot dead in his apartment by the Movement 2 June during an attempt to kidnap him. The Movement's most spectacular act was the kidnapping of the Chairman of the Berlin CDU on 25 February 1975 and the successful enforced release of five prisoners. At this time, the group's core members were Fritz Teufel (member of Kommune 1 at the end of the sixties), Ralf Reinders, Ronald Fritsch, Gerald Klöpper, Till Meyer, Inge Viett, Juliane Plambeck and Gabriele Rollnick. In 1977, the group was decimated to such an extent through a wave of arrests, that it disintegrated. Some members, like Inge Viett, changed over to the RAF.

Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR)
Guerrilla group in Chile.

Red Army Faction (RAF)
The beginnings and the roots of the RAF can be found in West Berlin in the late sixties. The first operation by the RAF was the freeing of Andreas Baader from prison on 14 May 1970 and, after that, the group went underground. The RAF's first public declaration was issued under the title "Build up the Red Army". In June 1970, some members of the group went to Jordan to be given military training by the Fatah. After returning in 1970, the RAF robbed three banks all at one time with other militants.

In April 1971 the RAF's first position paper "The Urban Guerrilla Concept" appeared. The RAF saw itself as part of worldwide movement of proletarian internationalism. The group's theoretical principles were based on Marxism-Leninism, the writings of Mao Zedong, but also on existentialism. In 1972, the RAF started its "May Offensive" attacks against the facilities of the US Army, the police and the judiciary as well as those of the Springer publishing group. The attacks caused four deaths and there were many injuries, making the RAF Germany's No. 1 enemy of the state. On 1 June

1972, Andreas Baader, Holger Meins and Jan-Karl Raspe were arrested and, on 7 June, Gudrun Ensslin. These were followed a short time after that by the arrest of Ulrike Meinhof and most of the other members.

The prisoners from the RAF were subjected to particularly harsh conditions of imprisonment, which were repeatedly criticised by the liberal and left-wing public and which led to many hunger strikes by the political prisoners. Although almost the entire RAF was arrested, the group reorganised itself in 1973/74. Holger Meins and Katharina Hammerschmidt died in prison, as did Ulrike Meinhof (in circumstances which still remain unclear today).

In 1975, the RAF attempted to force the release of 26 political prisoners by taking siege of the West German embassy in Stockholm. During the siege, two diplomats were shot dead and two members of the commando unit also died.

In 1976, the police registered around 150 bombing and arson attacks in 50 towns for which the RAF and other armed and militant groups were blamed.

In 1977, Attorney General Siegfried Buback and his chauffeur were shot dead. The RAF tried once again to force the prisoners' release by taking hostages. The boss of the Dresdner Bank, Jürgen Ponto, was killed during a kidnap attempt and, on 5 September, RAF members kidnapped the President of the Employers' Association, Hanns-Martin Schleyer and shot dead the people accompanying him. The plan was to exchange him for eleven prisoners. The government, in cooperation with the opposition, reacted with a large and a small emergency task force which practically revoked the division of powers, and imposed a total contact ban on the prisoners, their lawyers and their relatives and a gagging order on the press. Democracy was virtually suspended and an unexplained state of emergency put into practice. In public life, but also in the emergency task force, it was discussed whether the prisoners should be dealt with as hostages. The reintroduction of the death penalty was also brought up in the public arena, as was the option of shooting the prisoners. When a Palestinian commando unit then hijacked an aeroplane full of German holidaymakers, the political climate in the Federal Republic was at boiling point, and today the "German Autumn" is still spoken of. The GSG 9 stormed the hijacked plane on the night of 17/18 October and freed the hostages; the kidnappers were all shot dead, except for Souhaila Andrawes. On 18 October 1977, Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin and Jan-Karl Raspe were found dead in their cells, and Irmgard Möller was seriously injured. Despite the official version that the prisoners committed suicide, a series of questions concerning the causes of death still remain open today. On 12 November, Ingrid Schubert was found dead in her cell in Stadelheim and doubts about the verdict of suicide in this case could also never be satisfactorily put aside. Hanns-Martin Schleyer was found shot dead on 19 October.

At the end of 1977 the RAF seemed to be at an end: many of its members were dead, in prison or had left the group. However, it reorganised and, in the spring of 1980 members of the Movement 2 June joined up with the RAF.

In 1979, the RAF attempted to assassinate Nato Commander Alexander Haig in Brussels. In April 1981, the prisoners once again began a hunger strike, in the course of which Sigurd Debus died. In August, the RAF attacked the headquarters of the US Air Force in Europe in Ramstein and, in September, a rocket-propelled grenade only just missed the car of US General Frederick Kroesen. The RAF issued its "May Paper" in 1982 and called for the formation of an anti-imperialistic front in Western Europe. Another hunger strike began in 1984. A Nato school in Bad Tölz was attacked and, on 1 February 1985, the chairman of the MTU, Ernst Zimmermann, was killed. On 8 August, the RAF carried out a bomb attack on the US Air Force base in Frankfurt, as a result of which two people died and eleven were injured. In the run-up to this operation, the US soldier Edward Pimental was murdered for his ID card. In 1986, members of the RAF murdered Karl Heinz Beckurts, member of the board of Siemens together with his driver and, in the same year, Gerold von Braunmühl from the Foreign Office was murdered.

In the autumn of 1989, they killed the chairman of the board of the Deutsche Bank, Alfred Herrhausen and, in 1990, their attempted assassination of the Secretary of State in the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Hans Neusel, failed. In 1991, during the Gulf War, the RAF shot at the US Embassy in Bonn and, on 1 April 1991, the chairman of the Treuhand Agency, Detlef Rohwedder, was shot and killed. In 1992, the RAF declared that it wanted to retract the escalation. The last operation it carried out was the explosion of the building shell of the Weiterstadt prison. In 1993, the RAF members Birgit Hogefeld and Wolfgang Grams were arrested and Grams was shot dead during this police operation.

In April 1998, the RAF dissolved itself.

The Red Brigades

The Brigate Rosse (BR) emerged from radical struggles within factories at the beginning of the seventies. After these workers' struggles within the factories, which were also led by militants in some places, had quietened down, the BR carried out armed operations against the Italian state and its representatives on several occasions. The high point of this escalation involving the government (a coalition of all parties including the Communist Party) and the BR was the kidnapping and murder of the Christian Democratic Party leader Aldo Moro in 1978. The heavy wave of repression that followed, which affected the entire radical Left, in conjunction with splits among the Left and the "Pentiti" (principal witnesses for the prosecution) almost completely wiped out the BR.

Release

Self-help group of drug addicts for drug addicts.

Revolutionary Cells (RZ)

The revolutionary cells emerged in 1973 in Frankfurt and, like the RAF and the Movement 2 June, originated in the post-1968 milieu of the left-wing student movement. The RZ first drew attention to themselves in 1973 when they carried out an attack on the US corporation ITT which had supported the 1973 military putsch in Chile. They were organised in small, loosely formed cells and most of their members did not live underground. They were critical of the RAF, partially because of its elitist and hierarchical style. There were RZ members who took part in international commando operations such as the hostage-taking of OPEC ministers in Vienna (1975) and the Entebbe aeroplane hijacking (1976). The hijacking of this Air France plane provoked a reaction of horror internationally and among some on the German Left because, in the course of the hijacking, the Israeli passengers were separated from the other passengers.

The RZ issued the newspaper *Revolutionärer Zorn* (Revolutionary Rage). In 1982, the Office of the Federal Criminal Police assumed that the RZ were responsible for 132 bombing and arson attacks and the number of cells were estimated to be between 50-100 with about 300-500 members. The RZ operations were later planned in such a way as not to put lives at risk. The RZ were more strongly connected to existing social movements and it was almost impossible for the security forces to arrest them. In the media they were portrayed as "after-work terrorists". An independent women's organisation was set up under the name Rote Zora, which became notorious because of its Germanywide operation of carrying out attacks on branches of the clothing company Adler in 1987.

German Socialist Student Union (SDS)
Until the beginning of the sixties, this was the student wing of the SPD in the universities; a large group split off from the SDS to set up its own organisation (SHB). From the mid-sixties, the SDS developed into the main force in the student movement with Rudi Dutschke as one of its most famous activists. Between 1967 and 1969, the SDS acted as the focal point of the "New Left" which was becoming increasingly radical. After the zenith of the student movement had been reached, the SDS dissolved in 1970. The "New Left" split up into various groups, parties and currents, ranging from the dogmatic Marxist-Leninist to the undogmatic anti-authoritarian movement.

Socialist Patients' Collective (SPK)
The SPK was founded in February 1970 by the doctor Wolfgang Huber in Heidelberg. This self-help organisation had up to 400 members at times. The SPK was of the opinion that the social and economic conditions in the Federal Republic of Germany were responsible for people's illnesses and reasoned that only by destroying the system, would you be able to make people healthy again. Its motto was: "Turn illness into a weapon." Some SPK members went on to join militant groups.

Springer Publishing Group
The Springer publishing group became an 'enemy force' for the Left because of its aggressive reporting against the extra-parliamentary opposition (APO), the SDS and the student movement. The Springer publishing group was seen as sharing responsibility for the death of Benno Ohnesorg who was shot by a policeman during a demonstration (1967), as well as the assassination of Rudi Dutschke (1968) by an extreme right-wing activist. One of the slogans of the time was "*Bild* helped pull the trigger." (*Bild* is the Springer group's

largest daily tabloid). Among the reactions to these murders were an "Anti-Springer Campaign" and attacks on Springer premises.

Toter Trakt (Dead Wing)

A cell in a completely isolated wing of a prison, in which the prisoner can hear no noise whatsoever from the outside. The cell is surrounded by absolute silence. The results are a state of agitation, optical and acoustic hallucinations, extreme difficulty in concentrating and dizzy spells. The total isolation in the Dead Wing is a type of torture, so-called 'white torture', without physical interference, but with the intention of destroying a person both mentally and physically.

Traube Affair

In February 1977, the *Spiegel* magazine revealed that the German intelligence agency, BND, and the Office for the Protection of the Constitution had installed bugs in the apartment of atomic power station manager Klaus Traube because of his contacts with people who were against nuclear power. This illegal bugging operation became a scandal, especially when it came to light that the secret services had carried out other illegal bugging operations in 1975/76, above all in the cells of the RAF prisoners.

Tupamaros

Description of the members of the Uruguayan guerrilla movement Movimiento de Liberación Nacional (MLN). The Tupamaros formed at the beginning of the sixties and earned a great deal of support among the population with their "Robin Hood operations". In 1985, a mass movement forced the military dictatorship, which had come to power in a putsch in 1973, to relinquish this power. The Tupamaros were granted amnesty with the transition to power of a civil government and then reorganised themselves as a legal political group. The Tupamaros were the role model for many urban guerrilla movements throughout the world.

Weathermen

A group which split off from the US American SDS in the sixties and which declared itself a "revolutionary organisation of communist men and women". The name Weathermen comes from a line in the Bob Dylan song 'Subterranean Homesick Blues': "You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows."

REMEMBERING THE ARMED STRUGG

On 21 October 1971 Margrit Schiller was arrestec imprisoned by the German government first for two and then for another five, for a murder she did not co This book is Margrit's own story of political radicalisation in the 1960s, her integration into the German urban guerrilla (Baader-Meinhof) before her arrest, the terror of solitary confinement, and the mysterious deaths of four of her colleagues in prison.

Margrit was part of the youth generation in post-war Germany, the 1968 revolutionary movement and the resistance to the Vietnam War. Daughter of a Stalingrad returnee, Margrit joined those who broke the silence over Germany's Second World War history and sought to overthrow capitalism.

> "The story of Margrit Schiller is reminiscent of that of Primo Levi when he set out as a delicate adolescent to join the resistance, holding a revolver which he barely knew how to use..."
> Daniel Gil

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